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Arctic Images 1818-1859

Ingeborg Høvik

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Abstract

This thesis asks whether there existed a unified view of the Arctic during the time period connected to the high point of British endeavour to find a Northwest Passage, from the first expeditions of the nineteenth-century in 1818 to the return of the last Franklin search party in 1859, forty-one years later. Using this time frame as its marker, the focus of the thesis is primarily on British representations of Arctic landscapes, exploration and Inuit peoples. Through careful empirical analysis of a variety of media, including professional painting, on-the-spot sketches, prints and popular exhibitions, it examines from an art historical viewpoint the historical, political, social and aesthetic contexts in which Arctic representations occurred.

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John Webber (artist), William Sharp (engraver). *A Night Dance by Women, in Hapae*, 1784, engraving, 22.4 x 38.6 cm, published in James Cook and James King *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, folio, London: Order of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

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John Ross (artist), J. Brandard (engraver). *Illictu and Otoogiu*, 1835, coloured lithograph, 11.6 x 10.5, published in John Ross, *Appendix to the Narrative of a Second Voyage in Search of a North-West Passage and of a Residence in the Arctic Regions During the Years 1829, 1830, 1831, 1832, 1833*. London: Library and Archives Canada.

3.25

John Ross. *Otoogiu*, 1830-33, watercolour, 24 x 16 cm, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

3.26

John Ross. *Illictu*, 1830-33, watercolour, 24 x 16 cm, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

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John Ross. *Nimna Himna*, 1830-33, watercolour, 24 x 16 cm, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

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John Ross (artist), J. Brandard (engraver). *Nimna Himna Called by the Men Old Greedy*, 1835, coloured lithograph, 11.6 x 10.6 cm, published in John Ross, *Appendix to the Narrative of a Second Voyage in Search of a North-West Passage and of a Residence in the Arctic Regions During the Years 1829, 1830, 1831, 1832, 1833*. London: 1835, Library and Archives Canada.

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John Ross (artist), J. Brandard (engraver). *Kemig*, 1835, coloured lithograph, published in John Ross, *Appendix to the Narrative of a Second Voyage in Search of a North-West Passage and of a Residence in the Arctic Regions During the Years 1829, 1830, 1831, 1832, 1833*. London: A.W. Webster, The British Library, London.

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John Ross. *Shullanina*, 1830-33, watercolour, 24 x 16 cm, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

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John Ross. *Kakikagiu*, 1830-33, watercolour, 24 x 16 cm, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

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John Ross. *Tirikshiu*, 1830-33, watercolour, 24 x 16 cm, Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge, Cambridge.

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George F. Lyon (artist), Edward Finden (engraver). *An Esquimaux Watching a Seal*, 1824, print, 22 x 27 cm, published in William Edward Parry, *Journal of a Second Voyage for the Discovery of a North-West Passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific; Performed in the Years 1821-22-23, in His Majesty's Ships Fury and Hecla, under the Orders of Captain William Edward Parry, R.N., F.R.S., and Commander of the Expedition*, London: John Murray, National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London.

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B. *Plate XXII*, 1833, print, published in Johann G. Spurzheim, *Phrenology, in Connexion with the Study of Physiognomy [...] to Which Is Prefixed a Biography of the Author by Nahum Capen*, Massachusetts: District Court of Massachusetts.

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Author's Note

Inuit names appearing in the text are most often written as they occur in the relevant primary source material.

For illustrations, artist, title, date, medium and measurements are listed when known. Thumbnail images in black and white follow the bibliography. A CD containing full colour images is also provided.

Anonymous journal and newspaper articles appear at the end of the bibliography, followed by archival material.

The following abbreviations are used in this thesis:

CCA – Cathedral Archives, Canterbury, UK

HK – Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg, Germany

NLS – National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh, UK

NMM – National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, London, UK

SPRI – Scott Polar Research Institute, Cambridge, UK

SNPG – Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh, UK

Introduction

This thesis explores Western perceptions of the Arctic through analyses of a selection of a very diverse body of visual material – both known and unpublished – connected to Britain’s search for a Northwest Passage between 1818 and 1859.¹ Drawn from collections at the National Maritime Museum, Scottish National Portrait Gallery and British Library amongst others, the images discussed occur in a variety of media, including portraits and landscape painting, on-the-spot sketches, mass produced prints and popular exhibitions. Using nineteenth-century art journals, newspapers, advertisements, letters of correspondence, expedition documents and more to place these images in the historical, social and aesthetic contexts in which they occurred, the thesis examines how the Arctic was perceived during the ‘high point’ of British endeavour in this region. Understanding Arctic images as implicated in historical debate linked to Britain’s growing, worldwide investment in imperial and colonial projects, the thesis asks: do these diverse media, forms of display and different artistic approaches add up to a unified idea of the Arctic?

Driven by the hypothetical existence of a fast route to markets in Asia, the British search for a Northwest Passage is a long and continuous history of attempts, from

¹ The Arctic, a massive area inhabited by hundreds of distinct peoples, each with diverse societies and separate histories of southern contact, can be defined in multiple ways. Rather than a definition based on climatic, geological, latitudinal, cultural or national limitations, ‘the Arctic’ in this thesis refers only to the geographic areas connected to Britain’s search for a Northwest Passage. This consists of coastlines in Nunavut and western Greenland, from the shoreline on both sides of Davis Strait and Baffin Bay and, moving north and west through Lancaster Sound, to the shores along various straits, sounds, gulfs and inlets in central Nunavut, including Baffin Island, Somerset Island, Boothia Peninsula, King William Island and Victoria Island, as well as the shores along Hudson Strait, Foxe Channel and Foxe Basin by the entrance to Davis Strait further south. It also includes parts of the Arctic Canadian mainland, where explorers such as John Franklin and John Rae mapped coastlines and rivers.

John Cabot's second voyage at the very end of the fifteenth century and Martin Frobisher's voyages in the sixteenth, to James Cook's circumnavigation of the globe in the eighteenth. In the early and mid nineteenth century, which is the subject for this thesis, this search was taken up with renewed vigour after the Napoleonic Wars ended in 1815. The resulting peace not only made a reopening of Arctic exploration possible, it also gave the Admiralty a means to deal with the great number of naval officers who were now unemployed and on half-pay.² Thus, in 1818 the Admiralty sent out two expeditions simultaneously: one, commanded by Captain John Ross and Lieutenant William Edward Parry, tried for an east-west passage through Baffin Bay, while the other, led by Captain David Buchan and Lieutenant John Franklin, sailed north in search of a passage across the North Pole. Numerous British expeditions set sail for the Arctic in the forty years that followed, resulting in substantial discoveries and claims to new lands and seas.³

Arguing that the attainment of a Northwest Passage was 'a peculiarly British object', John Barrow, the Second Secretary to the Admiralty, was behind much of this renewed interest.⁴ As Barrow's statement suggests, there were additional motives at play beyond commercial and scientific gains. In his 1836 defence of continued Arctic exploration, Barrow made this point rather clearly, declaring that England had both a claim and duty to discover a Northwest Passage for the pride of his nation and the greater good of the world. Based on a long history of exploration in the Arctic, the Northwest Passage essentially belonged – in Barrow's mind – to Britain.

the honor [sic] and reputation which England has acquired among the continental nations of Europe, for her successful exertions in extending our knowledge of the globe, both by sea and land, has very naturally created in the public mind an ardent desire [...] that further endeavours should be made to complete what has been left unfinished.

² Fleming, 2001 (1998), pp. 1-2.

³ For a chronology of major expeditions to the Arctic between 1818 and 1859 see Fleming, 2001 (1998), pp. xiii-xvi.

⁴ Hayes, 2003, p. 59.

[...] England would be held altogether inexcusable [...] were she to suffer any other nation, by her own indifference, to rob her of all her previous discoveries, by passing through the door which she had herself opened.⁵

To Barrow it was a matter of affirming England's position to the rest of the world. Ross's and Buchan's 1818 expeditions thus not only reopened Britain's historical quest for a Northwest Passage – they actively took part in a prestigious project that sought to symbolically assert Britain's position as an imperial power and world-leading nation.

It would be wrong to suggest that the Arctic was only of symbolic value to Britain's imperial project, however. An early and important large gain to Britain's empire, Canada officially became a British possession in 1763 – although Rupert's Land, a large area surrounding Hudson's Bay, had been under the control of the Hudson's Bay Company, which represented British commercial interests in this region, since 1670.⁶ In addition, Britain's acquisition of Canada was contemporaneous with the start of its expansion into the Pacific. During the late 1760s and 1770s, Cook's three voyages charted territories in the North and South Pacific that were either completely new or little known in Europe. His discoveries and land claims added substantially to Britain's overseas empire, including the territories of Australia (New South Wales), New Zealand, the Hawaiian Islands, Vanuatu (New Hebrides), New Caledonia and the northwest coast of America. If a Northwest Passage had proved viable, it would therefore have linked Britain's possessions in Canada and the Pacific and its new territory of Australia – as well as bringing Britain closer to markets in Asia.

In reality the Arctic remained, however, a very different region from other areas subjected to British imperialism. Despite repeated attempts, the Northwest Passage was unattainable and the Arctic proved impenetrable to British endeavours. Thus, although the area had in theory economic and strategic potential, it never moved beyond the stage of exploration. Except for a booming whaling industry in Davis

⁵ Barrow, et al., 1836, p. 34.

⁶ The area that had been controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company was expanded when France had to give up The Province of Quebec after losing the Seven Years War. See Chaturvedi, 1996, p. 47.

Strait during the first three decades of the century, the Arctic revealed no further prospect for commercial development or civilising missions.⁷ While concurrent expeditions to Central Africa uncovered an abundance of natural resources to exploit and peoples to dominate, voyages to the North were not followed by settlement or the advancement of other institutional and economic apparatuses.⁸ The geographic growth of empire brought about through Arctic exploration was in reality mostly nominal; nor was there much impact made on the indigenous populations. Unlike the West Indies and India, which were British colonies by the early 1800s, the Arctic was not subjected to political domination, economic exploitation and military control. Although these aspects of imperialism, succinctly defined by Robert Johnson as ‘a concept of power and influence’, may not seem to apply to the Arctic, the region was certainly involved in Britain’s global imperial project.⁹ Though removed from colonial space, the Arctic presented a convenient rationale for empire building elsewhere.

Because of the region’s uniqueness it became an ideal setting for developing and consolidating the terms of British masculine endeavour.¹⁰ More linked to geographical curiosity than colonial ambition, the ‘pure’ space of the Arctic, where men ‘laid down their lives for the advancement of geography’, provided a useful counterpoint to the moral dilemmas of colonial exploitation in other corners of the globe, such as slavery in the West Indies.¹¹ The Arctic was seen to bring out the essential quality of the explorers, and of British male identity in particular. Stout, gallant, disciplined, moral, dutiful, Christian, self-sacrificing, civilised, heroic – taken together, such notions of the Arctic explorer defined a quintessential ‘Britishness’ that seemed to justify territorial expansion and naturalise colonial rule.¹²

⁷ David, 2000, p. 193.

⁸ David, 2000, p. 193. For a timeline of major expeditions to Africa, see Fleming, 2001 (1998), pp. xiii-xv.

⁹ Johnson, 2003, p. 2.

¹⁰ For a discussion of these issues see Hill, 2008, chapter 1.

¹¹ Joseph Conrad in Loomis, 1977, p. 106.

¹² Hill, 2008, pp. 6-14, 50.

Though unsuccessful, Ross's and Buchan's 1818 expeditions mark the beginning of the high point in Britain's history of Arctic exploration. Characterised by intense activity, this period lasted until 1859 and, following C.C. Loomis, can be usefully divided into three distinct phases.¹³ The primary concern of the first phase, which lasted from 1818 to 1844, was the exploration and charting of new waters and territories. Including Ross's and Buchan's inaugural voyages, a total of twelve overland and maritime expeditions were sent out to find the Northwest Passage. Some notable explorers and expeditions emerged during this time, in particular John Franklin's disastrous First Overland Expedition of 1819-1822; William Edward Parry's Second Voyage to Foxe Basin in 1821-1823; and, John Ross's Second Voyage to Boothia Peninsula in 1829-1833. Spending several years in the Arctic, these expeditions – especially those of Franklin and Ross – were seen to demonstrate the bravery, hardihood and moral discipline of British naval officers. The voyages of Parry and Ross stand out further within this first phase of exploration for their separate encounters with Arctic indigenous peoples. Through prolonged interactions, Parry and Ross produced substantial amounts of visual and written records of distinct Inuit peoples that were as yet unknown in Europe.¹⁴

The second phase begins with the departure of Franklin's last voyage in 1845 and ends with its disappearance, which was only fully recognised three years later in 1848.¹⁵ Franklin's expedition originally consisted of 134 men, making it one of the largest expeditions – if not the largest – to date.¹⁶ His crew was divided between two

¹³ Loomis, 1977, p. 100. Robert David also uses a division of three phases, but his is different from the one that is employed by Loomis (and adopted in this thesis). David combines together the Franklin expedition and searches into his second phase, which he dates 1845-1860, with his third phase going on to cover the period from 1860 to 1914. David, 2000, p. xvii.

¹⁴ Parry worked together with the explorer-artist Lieutenant George Francis Lyon, who was made Captain after his return to England in 1823.

¹⁵ Loomis calls this phase 'The Disappearance of the Franklin Expedition'. Loomis, 1977, p. 100.

¹⁶ Franklin's crew was reduced to 129 men at Disko Bay, Greenland, as five became ill and returned back home on a transport vessel. Beattie and Geiger, 2004 (1987), pp. 43-45. By comparison, Ross's and Parry's First Voyages each numbered 94, whilst Parry's Second and Third had 118 and 122 respectively. See Parry, 1826, p. xii; Parry, 1824a, p. ii; Parry, 1821a, p. ii; Ross, 1819, pp. xiv-xv.

ships, the *Hecla* and the *Fury*, both sturdy-built bomb vessels further reinforced with sheet iron on their bows. Franklin's vessels were furnished throughout with the latest available technology: screw propellers and strong engines to navigate through the ice (*Erebus* was equipped with a 25-horsepower de-wheeled locomotive); desalinators to ensure a supply of freshwater onboard; and pipes conveying hot water from a boiler and steam-forming apparatus to provide heating below deck.¹⁷ It was highly anticipated that Franklin's crew, in 1845 'the most technologically advanced and best-equipped exploration team ever', would finally succeed in completing Britain's longstanding search for a Northwest Passage.¹⁸ However, the ships left never to return again. Whilst the 129 sailors were dying from scurvy, lead poisoning, frostbite and starvation on King William Island, the Admiralty and general public slowly started realising that something had gone wrong. In coming to terms with the fate of the expedition, the public's shock and horror gradually mounted, continuing throughout the next decade and a half.¹⁹

Lasting from about 1848 to 1859, the third phase is characterised by the ensuing searches and aftermath of Franklin's fatal voyage. During this time between thirty and forty search expeditions set forth from Britain and the United States, with John Rae's overland expedition of 1853-1854 and Francis Leopold McClintock's voyage of 1857-1859 being of primary importance. Although the stated task of the search expeditions was to solve the mystery of Franklin's disappearance, they covered a lot of new territories and waterways in the process, adding substantially to the geographical knowledge of the Canadian Arctic. In Barrow's map of 1818, the areas north of Davis Strait and westwards to Bering Strait are blank, for example, while by 1859 McClintock was able to produce a nearly complete outline of the geography of this region.²⁰ In this phase it was also agreed that Robert McClure's expedition of 1850-1854 had finally found the Northwest Passage, even though his transit was not

¹⁷ Beattie and Geiger, 2004 (1987), p. 35.

¹⁸ Beattie and Geiger, 2004 (1987), pp. 35, 33; See also Loomis, 1977, p. 104.

¹⁹ Loomis, 1977, p. 106.

²⁰ For images of these maps see Hayes, 2003, p. 60; M'Clintock, 1881 (1859), pp.viii-ix.

made by sea alone.²¹ Together with McClure's accomplishment, McClintock's return in 1859 with remnants from Franklin's expedition, including the discovery of a written record from 1847 and 1848 that indicated the fate of the men, marks the end of the high point of British engagement in the Arctic. With the charts more or less complete and a Passage 'found' England could, just as Barrow had stressed in 1836, withdraw from the region with its reputation intact. In addition, new imperial wars required the Navy's presence elsewhere and, with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869, the appeal of an icebound, though shorter passage to the Pacific diminished.²²

This would in turn change the face of Arctic exploration – while the British all but withdrew, a new generation of American and Scandinavian explorers emerged after 1850, in what might be thought of as a fourth phase. In the first half of the century there had been little interest in the Arctic beyond finding a Northwest Passage. Throughout the entire period of Britain's engagement in the Arctic, the Admiralty did not supply expeditions with scientists, and although officers did add to scientific knowledge they had no formal scientific training. By contrast, the new generation of explorers that entered the scene in the wake of the Franklin disaster were educated scientists with concerns and interests specific to the Polar Regions. Operating without ties to any political or military institutions, men such as Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Adolf Erik Nordenskiöld and Fridtjof Nansen built on a pattern of polar exploration that had been established by the Swedish in the 1860s to initiate a new type of exploration that took science as its main goal.²³ Unlike the British who had generally refused, throughout decades of exploration, to 'go native', American and Scandinavian explorers keenly studied the Inuit, adopting their methods, clothing and technologies to great success.²⁴

²¹ After sailing west from Baffin's Bay, members of Edward Belcher's expedition were travelling on sledges across the ice when they met Robert McClure's expedition, which had come from the opposite, west-east direction Hayes, 2003, p. 99.

²² In the 1850s the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny and the Second Opium War, and in the 1870s the Second Anglo-Afghan War and wars in South Africa.

²³ Riffenburgh, 1994, p. 37.

²⁴ Spufford, 1996, pp. 234, 279-280, 288; Bloom, 1993, pp. 120-122; Riffenburgh, 1994, pp. 34-37. John Rae is certainly a clear exception. At the same time Rae, an Orcadian medical doctor and employee of the Hudson Bay Company, operated

From today's point of view, and as other scholars have argued, the Franklin expedition in many ways dominates the history of Arctic exploration. It serves in one sense as the climax or culmination of the first phase, while simultaneously acting as both the beginning and the end of the third phase, thus functioning as a backdrop to the changes in Arctic exploration witnessed in the fourth. In addition to its central role in the historiography of Arctic exploration, the Franklin expedition drove perceptions of the Arctic in culture at large.

The trauma following the recognition of Franklin's failure shattered national confidence, causing a shift in ideas about the Arctic landscape in particular.²⁵ Before the disappearance of Franklin's expedition, the Arctic, though understood as a sublime wilderness, was still seen as conquerable by Western man. In early to mid nineteenth-century literary representations, for example, notions of the Arctic as vast, strange, frozen and desolate could be understood as constituting a positive sublime – one that, like the Alps, appalled, yet expanded the spirit.²⁶ The Arctic's overwhelming nature and seeming resistance to human (European) technology, desires and domination made it an ideal source of creative inspiration, in particular for romantic authors, poets and artists. Similarly, expedition accounts of the 1820s and 1830s, presented thrilling stories of deprivation and solitude set in forbidding landscapes. Like the Arctic fictions and other literary or visual expressions generated by artistic imaginations, the hazard of the Arctic was always kept at a distance. As these narratives became available in book shops, libraries, coffee houses and reprints in the press, their real-life protagonists were safely back in Britain or, alternatively, already on their way to new adventures in the North. For these reasons, it was more or less expected that Franklin's last voyage, perhaps even better equipped than any previous voyage, would undoubtedly prevail in the Arctic. The expedition's failure

wholly outside the influence of the Admiralty. For more on Rae see McGoogan, 2002 (2001).

²⁵ See also Hill, 2008, pp. 17-19; David, 2000, p. 240.

²⁶ In a passage on the Alps from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, Byron writes 'All that expands the spirit, yet appals'. See Loomis, 1977, p. 98. For a discussion of the Arctic sublime and changes in popular perceptions of the Arctic following the Franklin tragedy, see Loomis, 1977.

thus ruptured romantic notions about the region, with the harsh reality of Arctic exploration – and an accompanying bleaker image – moving too close for comfort.²⁷

Throughout the period 1818 to 1859, Arctic exploration was dominated by a rather small and consistent cast of central protagonists. Officers who took part in the earliest attempts to find a Northwest Passage commonly re-emerged as the leaders of later expeditions. Thus, prominent officers of the first voyages – in particular Parry, Ross and Franklin – often went on to command several new expeditions.²⁸ These men became popular public figures owing both to the continuity and frequency of their expeditions and to the fact that their exploits were, of course, involved in a national project. After returning to England, Arctic naval officers were typically received as celebrities both nationally and abroad. In London, for example, they were often invited ‘into new social worlds [...] the kind of clubs to which a hero might be admitted where a simple Navy man might not’, while in Europe the public eagerly followed Britain’s progress in the search for a Northwest Passage and, later on, Franklin.²⁹ In turn, explorers kept alive and nourished the public’s appetite for their ongoing exploits, producing a constant stream of narratives and visual imagery that, together with their actual activities in the Arctic, were frequently discussed and debated in the press and referenced and incorporated into culture at large.

Within the historical framework broadly traced out above, the thesis intentionally adopts a case-study approach to explore strategically the question of whether there was a unified view of the Arctic. Selected groups of images frame distinct genres, each activating a particular thematic and requiring a different approach to art historical analysis. The material under consideration comprises different types of images and art practices, from sketches created by explorers in the field and the representation of these by artists and printmakers who never travelled to the Arctic, to high-art painting based wholly or in part on artists’ imaginations. These images are

²⁷ Riffenburgh, 1994, p. 31.

²⁸ Parry in 1818, 1819-1820, 1821-1823, 1824-1825 and 1827; Ross in 1818, 1829-1833 and 1850-1851; and, Franklin in 1818, 1819-1822, 1825-1827 and 1845–.

²⁹ Spufford, 1996, p. 52. Expedition accounts had a wide international distribution, with John Ross’s *Narrative* of 1835 for example being immediately translated into French, German and Swedish (all 1835); and Danish (1837).

utilised to focus attention on landscape painting, exploration imagery and portraiture and their relationships to issues of representation, transcription, reception, display, agency, popular culture and scientific thought. In examining these areas of enquiry, as well as the ways in which they overlap, the important distinction between ‘imaging’ and ‘imagining’ theorised by Bernard Smith in his study of related imagery from the Pacific provides a useful reference point throughout.³⁰

Following Smith’s art historical work on Cook’s voyages, the visual material discussed in this thesis can broadly be divided into two categories. Created with an object in view, ‘images’ are defined as first-hand representations, while ‘imaginings’ – based either directly on ‘images’ or re-presentations of these – are constructed without direct sensory contact with an object.³¹ Revolving around these two definitions, Smith describes a process wherein layers of imagination were added as images moved from first-hand representations to reinterpretations of these by, for example, engravers. From here a third level of imagination came into play in, for example, paintings created by artists who used re-presentations such as book illustrations or panoramas – ‘imaginings’ produced by engravers and painters who often used field drawings (‘images’) as a starting point – as sources of inspiration. In other words, ‘imaginings’ based on ‘imaginings’. In an Arctic context, the number of ‘images’ (essentially on-the-spot sketches by explorers) produced was, due to historical circumstance, rather limited, while the range of ‘imaginings’ available for public consumption was considerable.

It is important therefore to be aware of the different impact on popular perceptions and contemporary discourses on the Arctic these various forms of representations may have had. While first-hand ‘images’ were not readily available to the public eye, ‘imaginings’ such as book illustrations and in particular panorama paintings were far more widely circulated. Firmly rooted in the first-hand images produced in the field, re-presentations consequently had a more direct influence on popular perceptions than the sources from which they were copied. Paintings on the other hand were

³⁰ Smith, 1992.

³¹ Smith, 1992, p. xi.

often based wholly or in part on an artist's imagination – although they too may have used re-presentations as a reference point, albeit in more indirect ways than the engravers and panorama painters had, in turn, used the original source imagery. Even though the paintings produced by artists seem to have come the closest to pure fantasy, it is necessary to keep in mind that on-the-spot sketches by explorers, although conveying a closer relationship to the Arctic, were far from objective. All images are constructions, the results of complex interactions between forces in many different contexts.

Structure of the Thesis

The first chapter provides a review and critical discussion of existing literature on representations of the Arctic, focusing on relationships between scholarship in this area and discourse theory. Of particular importance is Said's theory of Orientalism and its legacy, including its limits in an Arctic context and, by extension, the potential and appropriateness of alternate ways of thinking. Serving to place the thesis within the field of Arctic studies, the first chapter further sets out the cultural and historical framework of this research, presenting a historiography of European representations of non-Western peoples (from the discovery of the New World up until the period under discussion) and an overview of intellectual thought, especially the development of the new life sciences, in the nineteenth century. From this starting point, the next three chapters present the visual analysis central to the thesis. Although the internal structure of these chapters varies, each includes a survey of existing scholarship before narrowing down to critical analysis of an individual image (or images) and related visual and textual materials. Taken together, this material and the particular topics to which they connect are meant to be suggestive, not comprehensive, of the time period under discussion; there is no claim that any one single image, medium or genre is somehow more conducive to a given subject than another. The intention is twofold: first, to consider the images discussed in this thesis against various historical, theoretical, aesthetical and critical perspectives; and

second, to bring to light the sometimes antithetical ways in which these images interacted with nineteenth-century ideas about the Arctic in Britain.

The second chapter approaches the question of whether there was a unified view of the Arctic through three landscape paintings by the well-known German, American and English artists Caspar David Friedrich, Frederic Edwin Church and Edwin Landseer. Bringing into play both British and non-British perspectives in the specific realm of high-art painting, the chapter situates these landscapes within nineteenth-century debates about the Arctic. In these contexts, the chapter places particular focus on the original display of the works and their critical reception in specialist art journals and newspapers during the period. The influence of representations of Arctic exploration circulating in popular culture at the time is central to the analyses of these works – which span the three phases of Arctic exploration – as is an understanding of their relationship to existing and emerging conventions of landscape painting. Sensitive to the roles of experience and proximity, the chapter revises established art historical scholarship by linking Friedrich's, Landseer's and Church's paintings to Arctic exploration and associated discussions in nineteenth-century society, thereby contributing new perspectives and a fuller understanding of these works to recent scholarship in Arctic studies and beyond.

The third chapter addresses the central question of the thesis by analysing a range of visual material resulting from John Ross's Second Voyage during the first phase of Britain's engagement in the Arctic in the nineteenth century. Taking as its underlying reference point the ways in which representations of the Arctic were produced during expeditions and then later put to use by and for audiences back home, the chapter examines more specifically how Ross may have contributed to current popular and scientific debates on both exploration and Inuit. A primary concern is the processes of transformation – both material and epistemic – to which Arctic 'images' were often subjected. Looking at the correspondence between the various forms of media coming out of Ross's voyage, the chapter works with issues of motive and validity and the ways in which these themes intersect with problems of interpretation connected to notions of legibility, 'bad art' and lost sources. Through its emphasis on

detailed visual analysis, the chapter significantly extends current understandings of Ross within Arctic scholarship by treating in depth a wider range of material than any previous study. At the same time it brings to the attention of art history more broadly a range of visual material not traditionally considered by the discipline.

The fourth chapter takes up the thesis's key question by examining portraits of Hans Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq, two Greenland Inuit men painted in Britain by professional artists during the first and third phases of Arctic exploration. Using a wide selection of historical documents, the chapter revolves around the tension between personal portraiture and ethnographic image. Comparisons with images and living displays of non-Western peoples that were typical for the time are central to the analysis, serving to both uncover and complicate the nature and terms of Zakæus's and Qalasirssuaq's interactions with exploration and British society. Investigating the potential agency and motives of both sitters and artists, the chapter inserts into Arctic scholarship, as well as art history and exploration studies more generally, material that was previously unknown or scarcely treated. In doing so, it draws attention to traditionally marginalised figures in historiographies of Arctic exploration and, by pointing to the possible presence of Inuit perspectives that existed alongside dominant nineteenth-century discourses, helps to expand the existing dimensions of Arctic studies.

Before proceeding, it is perhaps useful to emphasise that this is an art historical thesis about Arctic images arising in the specific context of Britain's search for a Northwest Passage during the first half of the nineteenth century. It is primarily concerned with tight visual analysis of a limited range of imagery, not with broad histories and theories of exploration and science, such as anthropology. Neither is it an exercise in critical theory or the production of new critical frameworks. As such, secondary literature takes a secondary role. Rather, the focus is on archival work with a particular emphasis on uncovering new material. In these contexts, this thesis is not an attempt to write a complete historiography of Arctic imagery that would, for example, comprehensively treat the representational lineages – both past and future – of the genres under discussion. While there is admittedly a somewhat limited

emphasis on Britain, this is not to say that the search for a Northwest Passage was a singularly British pursuit. The historical search for a passage through the Arctic involved Dutch as well as Russian attempts, while the second half of the nineteenth-century saw the beginning – as already noted – of Scandinavian and American expeditions to this area.³² At the same time the search for a Northwest Passage between 1818 and 1859 was clearly dominated by British expeditions, and it was within this context that the Arctic was typically experienced and imagined by artists and audiences within Europe and North America.

Although it is Britain's primacy in the Arctic that frames this thesis, it is hoped that the research presented here will serve to open up rather than close down the possibility for future discussion. Comparative studies of other countries' approaches to the penetration of the Arctic with that of the British would be one such area of further enquiry that would surely reveal new insights on the material at hand. Another approach would be to extend and amplify some of the areas of overlap already incorporated into this thesis. This might include a more thoroughly developed consideration of nineteenth-century French Salon paintings with Arctic themes, for example, or a fuller treatment of images relating to exploration elsewhere, such as those tied to Cook's late eighteenth-century voyages in the Pacific.³³ A third possibility could be to discuss the Arctic in relationship to images of other areas subjected to European power and dominance, such as the East and

³² Hayes, 2003, pp. 34, 41-43, 112-114.

³³ Although France did not send out expeditions to find the Northwest Passage in the time period under discussion, it had four prominent artists who regularly exhibited Arctic paintings at the Salon. Léon Cogniet, François-Auguste Biard, Auguste Mayer and Eugène Le Poittevin produced several Arctic-themed paintings during the 1830s and 1840s. A few of these, such as Le Poittevin's *Hivernage d'un équipage de marins hollandais sur la côte orientale de la Nouvelle Zemble* and Biard's *Combat contre des ours blancs*, developed from pure imagination. Most were based on real encounters, however. Mayer and Biard painted scenes from Spitsbergen and circumpolar Scandinavia, which they had visited in 1839, while Cogniet's *Une femme du pays des Esquimaux* was based on real life studies of an Inuk in Paris in 1826.

Africa.³⁴ However appealing these alternate approaches to the study of Arctic imagery may seem, it remains the fact that, despite an increasing bibliography of recent studies on the Arctic, little art historical research has been conducted in this area. It has been a central conviction in the planning and realisation of this thesis that there was, within the range of available scholarship, an identifiable need for in-depth visual analysis of Arctic images. In filling this gap by introducing to Arctic studies and art history alike both new perspectives on already published material and detailed readings of previously overlooked and unknown images, this study of how the Arctic was represented in visual culture and how this imagery may have articulated, shaped or challenged nineteenth-century discourses, is thus both timely and relevant.

In considering the spectrum of ‘images’ and ‘imaginings’ of the Arctic, this thesis responds to the central question of whether there was a unified view of the Arctic in the period linked to Britain’s search for a Northwest Passage between 1818 and 1859 by arguing that this region was not a closed field of thought and study. In addition to time- and place-specific circumstances and the discrete political, social and scientific contexts of the separate images, the various forms of artistic interactions with the Arctic covered in this thesis produced diverse representations of both landscape and Inuit. Although consistent stereotypes are certainly apparent throughout, the construction of the Arctic in Western visual culture was not a monolithic process that went unchallenged. Alongside mainstream, repeating images of the ‘Esquimaux type’ and a frozen, empty and hostile ‘North’, there existed alternative images and ideas that conversely presented the Arctic as aesthetic and Inuit as distinct individuals participating and moving within contemporary society.

³⁴ For art historical studies of these areas in isolation see Honour, 1989; Lemaire, 2005; Tromans, 2008. For a comparative study of the ways in which explorers in Africa and the Arctic were represented in the press see Riffenburgh, 1994.

Chapter 1: Scholarly and Historical Contexts

This chapter sets out to give an overview and critical analysis of current literature on the Arctic, with a particular focus on the works of previous authors that have discussed issues of representation in text or image. In mapping this field of study, the chapter begins by pointing to the relative lack of attention paid to visual material, as well as the general absence of visual analysis in treating it, in earlier scholarship on British representations of the Arctic in the early and mid nineteenth century.

Continuing its survey of key literature, the chapter then moves on to a discussion of discourse theory and the relevance of this way of thinking to Arctic studies. Of specific importance here is the work and legacy of Edward Said, whose theory of Orientalism lives on as a clear – if not always directly applied – methodological framework. Drawing attention to the limitations and problems of Said's thinking in the context of the Arctic in particular, the chapter considers the usefulness and applicability of other approaches. In this respect the writings of Stephanie Pratt and Mary Louise Pratt appear promising, with their notions of 'contact zone' and 'middle ground' helping to point to the existence of modes of thinking and representing that may have occurred beyond, alongside or even within the workings of a dominant discourse.

After locating this thesis in relationship to established scholarship within the field of Arctic studies, as well as discourse theory more generally, the chapter shifts focus to a presentation of the overall cultural and historical background framing this research. While this cultural and historical framework is not comprehensive – in the sense that it does not apply directly to all of the material discussed in this thesis – its intention

is to focus attention on two key, and at times overlapping, points of reference. The first is the tradition for ethnographic representation in Western art history, which can tentatively be traced from the early phase of European exploration of the New World in the sixteenth century up to the boom in Arctic expeditions that began in the second decade of the nineteenth century. Alongside and intersecting with this historiography of the so-called ‘ethnographic convention’, the chapter discusses parallel developments in Western thinking with a more specific focus on the emergence of the new life sciences that came about at the turn of the nineteenth century. These new disciplines – namely, comparative anatomy, phrenology and ethnology – occurred, at least in part, in response to the mass of ethnographic data that had been accumulated throughout the previous centuries of European exploration. The chapter establishes, then, a scholarly and historical foundation from which to carry out the thesis’s primary undertaking of employing close visual analysis of a specific selection of nineteenth-century visual material to address the question of whether a unified view of the Arctic existed in Britain in the period relevant to the search for a Northwest Passage between 1818 and 1859.

Arctic Studies – A Review of Key Literature

Although there exists a tradition for Arctic scholarship in the humanities that can be traced back as far as the early twentieth century, the majority of works written before the 1970s (and in some cases still today) are problematic due to their isolation from broader historical concerns.¹ Consisting of explorer biographies, expedition historiographies and chronological surveys, these works are mainly concerned with chronicling Arctic and Antarctic exploration.² They tend not to situate the Polar

¹ See also David, 2000, pp. 1-5. In his foreword to Mirsky’s chronological history of Arctic exploration published in 1934, the American polar explorer Vilhjalmur Stefansson notes that his own extensive polar library contained more than ten thousand titles, including 67 histories of polar exploration. Mirsky, 1934, p. ix.

² Early publications concerned with Arctic exploration include J. Douglas Hoare, 1906. *Arctic Exploration*; Clements Robert Markham, 1921. *The Lands of Silence, a History of Arctic and Antarctic Exploration*; Jeanette Mirsky, 1934. *To the North! The Story of Arctic Exploration from the Earliest Times to the Present*; and, Richard

Regions within a wider context, such as their significance to European and North American societies and cultures. Many of these works are further distorted by their authors' nationalism, moralising efforts and unrestrained respect and esteem for the explorers.³ An example of this type of writing is Farley Mowat's *Ordeal by Ice*, a survey of expeditions in search of the Northwest Passage that 'brings the quality of these men into sharp focus so that we recognize them as superb animals, imbued with an innate strength derived from struggle with physical adversity, to which we owe ascendancy over all other forms of life'.⁴ Partaking in a vein of history writing that Lisa Bloom describes as 'the ongoing celebration of "great" white explorers [...] as "heroes" of the national culture',⁵ this primarily mainstream literature does more to sustain and augment rather than challenge or break down persisting stereotypes of both the Arctic and the men who allegedly conquered it.

Tested as early as 1922, ideas about the Arctic as a sublime, barren, lifeless and desolate wilderness eternally covered in ice and snow have come increasingly under attack, with recent scholars additionally questioning the ways in which such stereotypes have served to accentuate the bravery and masculinity of the explorer.⁶ A key text in the emergence of revisionist approaches to the Arctic is Roland Huntford's 1979 book *Scott and Amundsen*.⁷ Exposing the incompetence and arrogance of England's perhaps most famous polar explorer, Robert Falcon Scott,

J. Cyriax, 1939. *Sir John Franklin's Last Arctic Expedition*. Publications after the Second World War include: L. P. Kirwan, 1959. *The White Road, a Survey of Polar Exploration*; Farley Mowat, 1973 (1960). *Ordeal by Ice, the Search for the Northwest Passage*; Robert E. Johnson, 1976. *Sir John Richardson, Arctic Explorer, Natural Historian, Naval Surgeon*; Robert L. Richards, 1985. *Dr John Rae*; Pierre Berton, 1988. *The Arctic Grail*; Anthony Brandt, 2005. *The North Pole: A Narrative History*; and, Jon E. Lewis, 2007. *The Mammoth Book of Polar Journeys*.

³ See also Stefansson in Mirsky, 1934, pp. ix-x.

⁴ Mowat, 1973 (1960), p. 14. First published in 1960, Mowat's work was again included in the 1973 trilogy *Top of the World*.

⁵ Bloom, 1993, p. ix.

⁶ Although Stefansson drew on his intimate, first-hand experience of the Arctic to argue for a friendly and fertile Arctic, such ideas seem to have only gradual impact on longstanding stereotypes. David Anderson and Mark Nuttall advocate much the same as Stefansson over eighty years later with their notion of a cultivated, warm and populated Arctic, revealing that changes in popular perceptions of the Arctic are slow. See Stefansson, 1922. Anderson and Nuttall, 2004, Chapter 1.

⁷ Huntford, 1980.

Huntford's controversial publication paved the way for renewed scholarly interest in the Polar Regions that has progressively sought to overturn dominant histories of polar exploration. An example of these new directions in Arctic scholarship is Sherrill Grace's feminist study of Mina Benson, who mapped and explored the interior of northern Labrador in 1905, then one of the last unknown (to white explorers) areas of North America.⁸ Other authors have focused attention on the nationalist and imperialist attitudes of various polar explorers, including for example Kenn Harper's writings on Robert Peary's ruthless exploitation of the Inughuit in his several expeditions between 1891 and 1909.⁹ Alongside these critical approaches, the Arctic has been pulled into other scholarly contexts serving both to further open up and nuance the narrow focus on exploration that traditionally characterised polar studies.¹⁰

In the wake of Edward W. Said's groundbreaking *Orientalism*, it was perhaps only a matter of time before scholars would similarly turn their attention to the Arctic – arguing for the ways in which it too, like the East, like Africa, had been constructed in the service of colonial and imperial ideologies.¹¹ To this end, researchers in cultural and literature studies in particular have called into question earlier scholarship's lack of consideration for the imperial, racial and gendered contexts of Arctic and Antarctic exploration. Within this more critical scholarship on the Arctic, the writings of Lisa Bloom, Francis Spufford and Jen Hill specifically address

⁸ Hubbard, 2004; Grace, 2007; Grace, 2008.

⁹ Harper, 2000 (1986). Wærp has focused on the Norwegian context through a discussion of Fridtjof Nansen's narrative, *First Crossing of Greenland* (1890) Wærp, 2007; Wærp, 2010.

¹⁰ In history of science, Trevor H. Levere has investigated how the British exploration of the Canadian Arctic contributed to the development of scientific knowledge in the nineteenth century. Through a focus on the printing press between 1818 and 1860, Janice Cavell has examined the popular dissemination of Arctic exploration narratives in British society, while Beau Riffenburgh has discussed in the Anglo-American context the role of the press and of explorers (both Africa and the Arctic), in establishing popular interest in and images of exploration between 1855 and 1910. See Levere, 1993; Cavell, 2008; Riffenburgh, 1994.

¹¹ Relevant studies of the East and Africa include Coombes, 1994; Geary and Webb, 1998; Honour, 1989; Nochlin, 1991 (1989); Tromans, 2008; Lemaire, 2005; Miller, 1985.

problems of representation, productively intersecting with the topic of this thesis and thus serving as important reference points for the material under discussion.

Bloom's *Gender on Ice: American Ideologies of Polar Expeditions* presents a case study of the *National Geographic* society's construction of an American national identity and imperialist ideology from the early twentieth century until the 1990s, analysing representations produced by that organisation in magazines (text and photographs) and one video. Turning to theories of nationalism and discursive formation, as developed by Benedict Anderson, Michel Foucault and Said, Bloom argues that the self-image Robert Peary constructed and the *National Geographic* promoted after his success at the North Pole in 1909, comprised a powerful masculinist and nationalist discourse in American society. Owing to her primary concern with the American explorer, Bloom is only marginally interested in representations of the Inuit and the Arctic, however, which are incorporated into her discussion of the *National Geographic*'s treatment of non-Western themes more generally. She demonstrates, for example, how the society's images and textual descriptions of women and landscapes in the so-called 'third-world' were naturalised, helping to constitute a collective national experience based on imaginary 'us'/'them' distinctions.¹²

British material is also of secondary concern to Bloom, featuring in the final chapter of her book in a comparison between Peary's self-representation and that of Robert Falcon Scott, whose poorly planned and executed expedition to the South Pole in 1910-1912 ended in the death of Scott and his final party.¹³ Pointing to the existence of a British discourse on national masculine identity – which she dates back only as far as the mid nineteenth century – Bloom usefully brings out the distinctiveness of Britain's engagement in the Arctic. While the American approach to the Arctic might be said to rest on ideals of performance and achievement, the British were remarkably capable of turning failure into heroism. Positing values of personal gallantry, moral courage and physical bravery as ends in and of themselves, the

¹² Bloom, 1993, pp. 73-78, 104-110.

¹³ Bloom, 1993, Chapter 4.

British not only succeeded in covering up their repeat failings, but produced evidence expressive of ‘the superiority of the British race’.¹⁴

Although he makes no direct reference to Bloom, Spufford’s *I May Be Some Time: Ice and the English Imagination* essentially takes up the thread from her last chapter. Arguing that the Scott expedition both consummated and ended a century old tradition of British polar exploration, Spufford presents an analysis of what he terms the ‘imaginative’ history paralleling this activity.¹⁵ Drawing loosely on Roland Barthes’s semiotic approach, Spufford claims that the Polar Regions became mythified in the course of the nineteenth century.¹⁶ Aiming to map the origins of these myths, Spufford uses analyses of novels, poems and non-fictional works, including expedition accounts, letters and newspaper articles to trace out a line of influence. Starting with factual descriptions of the Arctic and Antarctic in first-hand accounts dating from the late 1700s and early 1800s, Spufford moves on to the transformation of these in representations by poets, authors and explorers in the nineteenth century. Spufford argues that this process resulted in naturalised and internalised perceptions of nationality, gender and polar landscapes, which found their ultimate expression in the letters and diaries associated with Scott’s last expedition. Like Bloom, he usefully places representations of the Arctic and Antarctic in a wider historical context, demonstrating the importance of these regions to the construction of national culture and identity. Of particular value is his insightful study of British ‘imaginings’ in the nineteenth century, which shows how the sublime became a repeated topos in representations of the Arctic.¹⁷

There are however a number of failings with Spufford’s work. While the method and structure of his book are not exactly academic – his bibliography is incomplete and a reference system is not used – the primary problem is that Spufford does not position his research within the context of current scholarship.¹⁸ His book ends, for example,

¹⁴ Bloom, 1993, p. 120.

¹⁵ Spufford, 1996, p. 7.

¹⁶ Spufford, 1996, p. 5.

¹⁷ Spufford, 1996, Chapter 2.

¹⁸ See also David, 2000, p. 4.

with a narrative reconstruction of Scott's expedition that is wholly invented by Spufford himself. Taken together this situates *I May Be Some Time* somewhat awkwardly between popular science and academic text.¹⁹

Inspired by Spufford's work, Hill's *White Horizon: The Arctic in the Nineteenth-Century British Imagination* analyses Arctic expedition narratives and the literary texts they influenced, investigating how Arctic space in nineteenth-century Britain participated in larger cultural debates relating to gender, nation, race and empire.²⁰ Drawing on postcolonial theory, particularly the works of Said and Gayatri Spivak, Hill looks to representations in literature to find expressions of a cultural discourse in Britain that articulated and justified imperial practices. Hill's central argument is that though it fell outside Britain's colonial ambition, the Arctic functioned as an ideological terrain for national and imperial identity-building.²¹ The structure of Hill's book divides Arctic narratives into three phases that chronologically correspond to periods of British colonial encounter and expansion. Analysing a small selection of literary works that emerged during each of these three phases, Hill argues that representations of Arctic space initially articulated a form of national male identity that enabled and naturalised British rule in the colonies. During the Franklin search expeditions in the 1850s this discourse shifted to include comparisons between Arctic purity and racial whiteness, while in the last phase the knowledge of the death of Franklin disrupted it.²²

Structured around her insightful delineation of distinct phases, which serve to identify the impact of specific events and developments in Arctic exploration on contemporary discourses in Britain, Hill's book is most useful for the way it draws attention to the subaltern voices of British women who wrote against the contemporary discourse on gender. In importantly demonstrating that discourse is not always or necessarily hegemonic, a limitation of Hill's study is that it does not manage to prove this point through examples more directly tied to the Arctic.

¹⁹ Spufford, 1996, Chapter 10.

²⁰ Hill, 2008, Chapter 1.

²¹ Hill, 2008, pp. 3-4.

²² Hill, 2008, Chapter 1.

Instead, Hill focuses on works produced by people who never visited the Arctic, and, as in her chapters on *Jane Eyre* and *Frankenstein*, texts in which the Arctic only appears fleetingly, or as metaphor or subtext.²³

While works such as Bloom's, Spufford's and Hill's are welcome additions to contemporary perspectives on the Arctic, a focus on text and textual analysis remain the dominant concern of their scholarship.²⁴ Thus, although academic interest in the area of Arctic studies is steadily increasing,²⁵ a deeper understanding of the role and uniqueness of visual representations – as well as an appreciation for the particular disciplinary approaches needed to deal with these – appears to be a generally overlooked or underdeveloped realm of enquiry. Although a few edited volumes on polar photography are available, comparatively little attention has been paid to Arctic images in Western cultures.²⁶ This is especially true of early to mid nineteenth-century material.

At first glance, Russell A. Potter's *Arctic Spectacles: The Frozen North in Visual Culture, 1818-1875* would seem to fill this noticeable gap.²⁷ Developing a chronological history of the Arctic displays that emerged in Britain and America

²³ Hill, 2008, Chapters 3 and 4.

²⁴ Other examples include Atwood, 1995; Moss, 2006; Bloom, et al., 2008.

²⁵ Recent collections of research articles on the Arctic include *Cold Matters: Cultural Perceptions of Snow, Ice and Cold* and *Arctic Discourses*. Investigating cultural ideas in the West surrounding snow, ice and cold both past and present (*Cold Matters*), and 'southern' discourses on the Arctic from the mid nineteenth century until the present, including Russian as well as European and North-American representations (*Arctic Discourses*), both volumes consist of articles primarily concerned with literary representations. See Hansson and Norberg, 2009; Ryall, et al., 2010. Further evidence of the growing popularity of Arctic studies are the establishment of a research centre for comparative multidisciplinary studies of representations of the North at the Université du Québec à Montréal, and a research cluster at the Institute for Culture and Literature at the University of Tromsø. In conjunction with the last International Polar Year (March 2007-March 2009), there were several humanities-based interdisciplinary conferences on the Arctic, such as 'Arctic Discourses' (University of Tromsø, February 2008), 'North by Degree' (Philadelphia, May 2008) and, 'Human Dimensions in the Circumpolar Arctic' (Umeå University, October 2008).

²⁶ King and Lidchi, 1998; Hempleman-Adams, et al., 2009.

²⁷ Potter, 2007.

alongside the Arctic expeditions that operated during the time period of his focus, Potter considers a wide range of visual material in a bid to assert the importance of the Arctic to Victorian visual culture. Moving through various forms of panoramas and dioramas, images in illustrated newspapers and journals, paintings and exhibitions of living Inuit, photographs and lantern shows, Potter's book – which discusses some of the same imagery as this thesis – is valuable as a survey and catalogue of Arctic visual displays in Britain and America throughout the nineteenth century. Closer inspection of Potter's work reveals, however, that his documentary approach left little room for visual analysis beyond the purely descriptive. The methodological framework of Potter's book does not, moreover, address problems of representation.

One of the few other works to address visual representations is Robert David's *The Arctic in the British Imagination 1818-1914*.²⁸ David is critical to the discipline-specific approach adopted by other authors, which for him does not provide satisfactory evidence for their arguments.²⁹ By contrast, his historical study turns to a wealth of representations in order to make 'the widest connections' within the creation of popular perceptions of the Arctic.³⁰ As well as seeking to broaden the scope of history through analyses of literary, visual and material culture, David is concerned with situating the Arctic within the current interest area of imperial studies – in particular, representations of 'others'.³¹ A primary aim of his research is thus to test the appropriateness of representational theories developed in studies of other areas subjected to Western imperialism, most notably the East, Africa and India.³² Making use of John MacKenzie's critique of Orientalism, David goes on to find that the theoretical frameworks created by scholars such as Said and Michael Adas do not

²⁸ David, 2000.

²⁹ David is particularly critical to Spufford and Riffenburgh. See David, 2000, pp. 4-5, 20-21, 83, 112, 121, 158.

³⁰ David, 2000, p. 2.

³¹ David, 2000, p. 27. MacKenzie in David, 2000, p. xi.

³² David, 2000, pp. 2, 6, 9.

readily accommodate or account for Arctic representations, or the distinctiveness of the Arctic in terms of British imperial history.³³

Employing Bernard Smith's 'image-to-imagination' theory, David first examines how the Arctic was 'imaged' through analyses of representations made by explorers in both their expedition accounts and lectures at the geographical societies.³⁴ He then moves on to investigate how key themes of these 'images' impacted subsequent 'imaginings'. Turning to discussions of the daily press and illustrated weeklies, paintings, panoramas, *tableaux vivants*, photographs, various forms of museum displays, zoological gardens, photography, children's literature, textbooks, comics and board games, David argues that these diverse media were instrumental in forming public perceptions of the Arctic and its people.³⁵ Concerned with tracing out broad lines of Arctic representations and their dissemination in Britain over a hundred years, David's analysis of a wide range of evidence – although somewhat weighted toward the second half of the time period he examines – uncovers the characteristics of Arctic representations, including persisting stereotypes and the representational impact of the Franklin trauma at mid century. The limit of David's approach, however, is a want of visual analysis. Deploying several comparative tables, David's book is sparsely illustrated, including a total of only 27 images. His usage and descriptions of these images are brief, with many being mentioned in only a couple of sentences.³⁶ David does not consider the specific contexts of the separate images he includes in his analysis. Neither does he address the individual meaning of each image – for example, the ideas each might have expressed and the distinct motives of their creators – or their detailed and complex interactions with nineteenth-century discourses on the Arctic.

³³ David describes how British imperial interests in the Arctic never progressed beyond an association with exploration and that, due to its dearth of economic and political opportunities, the region did not excite colonial interests. See David, 2000, pp. 193, 237, 245-249.

³⁴ David, 2000, Chapters 2 and 3.

³⁵ David, 2000, Chapters 4, 5 and 6, pp. xix, 25, 56.

³⁶ See David's use of figures 25, 26 and 27, pp. 204-206, 210.

In contrast to David's multi-disciplinary, wide-ranging approach that is intentionally committed to treating as much material as possible, this art historical study examines issues of representation through a handful of carefully selected works (or bodies of works). In this sense, the thesis's in-depth analysis of individual works has more in common with the method utilised by Hill in her study of literature related to the Arctic. In contrast to Hill's book, however, this thesis examines works with a clear Arctic theme, focusing primarily on representations that originated in direct encounters with that region or its people. While the focus of this study is narrower than David's, the material under discussion is by no means homogeneous, treating as it does landscape painting, watercolour sketches, panorama paintings, book illustrations and portraits created by diverse people under very different circumstances and with varied influence on contemporary society. Thus, while the works of scholars such as Spufford and Hill might rightly be criticised for limiting their research to literature that was only or primarily accessible to the upper and educated middle classes, the visual material analysed in this thesis included a broader section of society.³⁷ Like the novels of Charlotte Brontë and Mary Shelley, art exhibitions or the realm of 'high art' undoubtedly excluded people from the lower middle and working classes due to their high entrance fees. On the other hand, explorers' on-the-spot sketches managed – through re-presentation – to reach more diverse audiences. When reproduced as illustrations in expedition narratives, such imagery was, like 'high art', usually available only to affluent people who could afford to buy these books.³⁸ When reproduced for the popular exhibitions however, the images would have been viewed by people of more modest means including in some instances the working class. Sensitive to these issues, this thesis attempts to build on the work of other scholars in Arctic studies, both complementing and occasionally correcting existing literature in order to arrive at a fuller and deeper understanding of the distinct role played by visual images in shaping perceptions of the Arctic in early to mid nineteenth-century Britain.

³⁷ David makes a similar point in his critique of Spufford and Riffenburgh. See David, 2000, p. 4.

³⁸ Cavell, 2008, pp. 28-29.

Discourse Theory and Representing the Arctic

In addition to assuming a constructionist view and thus rejecting the idea that representations are simply a truthful and unbiased record of a given moment, the theoretical approaches informing the bulk of recent Arctic scholarship can broadly be categorised as forms of discourse analysis. Developed by Michel Foucault, the discursive approach understands individual representations as part of a network of representations, ideas and practices that together make up a coherent (if sometimes internally contradictory) whole. Providing a language for talking about a given topic at a specific moment in history, discourses have an authority that limits the way a topic is and can be represented, thought about, practised and studied on an individual, institutional and national level. For Foucault discourses thus represent the state of knowledge or ‘truth’ within a culture at any one period and, in practice, are always applied to the regulation of social conduct and therefore closely tied to relations of power that permeate all aspects of culture.³⁹

With the publication of *Orientalism* in 1978, Said extended Foucault’s work, which primarily examined discursive formations within and about Western culture (in particular the concepts of madness, punishment and sexuality), to include representations of non-Western ‘others’.⁴⁰ Redefining the word ‘Orientalism’ as a Western discourse on the East, Said argued that a limiting network of representations of Eastern peoples and places – as produced and gradually systematised over time by individuals and institutions alike – ultimately helped define and solidify European cultural identity. According to Said, the East was not a free subject of thought but rather regulated by Western ideas and practices that dictated what could and could not be said about the East. Even the most imaginative writers of a given time period, such as Gustave Flaubert and Walter Scott, were constrained not only in what they could say about the Orient but also in what they could experience.⁴¹ Rooted in an

³⁹ Hall, 1997, pp. 44-49.

⁴⁰ Said, 2003.

⁴¹ Said, 2003, p. 43.

ontological and epistemological distinction between the ‘Orient’ and the ‘Occident’, orientalist discourse thus reduced the complexities of the East to essentialised ‘truths’ that were, according to Said, always racist, imperialist and ethnocentric.⁴² Constrained, coherent and hermetically sustained, Orientalism was further made possible by the West’s domination of the East. A fundamentally political doctrine, Said’s concept of Orientalism had real consequences as it was (and still is) closely connected to European and North American imperial and neo-imperial politics in the East.⁴³

Arguably the first text to convincingly demonstrate that colonialism not only operated as a form of military rule but also and simultaneously as a cultural ‘discourse’ of domination, Said’s work significantly influenced subsequent scholarly studies concerned with encounters between the West and other areas subjected to Western imperialism.⁴⁴ If not the ‘founder of postcolonial discursivity’,⁴⁵ Said’s insights have been central to a wealth of postcolonial and literary studies since the 1990s, including some works on the Arctic.⁴⁶ While Said is frequently referenced in Arctic research, most scholars writing today do not apply Orientalism directly and uncritically in their studies.

In something of a strategic deviation from Said and his all-encompassing emphasis on discourse, some authors entertain notions of ‘discursive change’ within discourse. Examples of this type of thinking include Hill, David and Riffenburgh, who each similarly note that the greatest change and challenge to the dominating discourse on the Arctic in the nineteenth century came in the wake of the failure of Franklin’s expedition.⁴⁷ For other scholars, Said exists amongst a selection of discourse theories

⁴² Said, 2003, pp. 2, 203-204.

⁴³ Said, 2003, pp. 204, 123.

⁴⁴ Young in Varisco, 2007, p. 5.

⁴⁵ Ali Behdad in Varisco, 2007, p. 9.

⁴⁶ Said is specifically referenced in Hill, 2008, p. 4; Bloom, 1993, pp. ix, 2; David, 2000, Chapter 1; Spufford, 1996, p. 229; Grace, 2002, pp. 23, 28; Ryall, et al., 2010, p. x; Wærp, 2010, p. 54.

⁴⁷ Hill has found that Franklin’s failure challenged certainties about British identity (including ideas about race, gender, nation and empire), which had relied on Arctic space for its articulation. David argues that this event provoked new perceptions of

– Grace, for example, uses Said alongside Mikhail Bakhtin and Foucault (the latter two being most central to her analysis)⁴⁸ – while still others attempt to modify Orientalism to allow for the acknowledgement of alternative views that may have occasionally impacted dominant discourses or desired to position themselves as ‘hybrid’, meaning both European/North American and Arctic.⁴⁹ In this sense, Arctic studies mirror an overall trend noticeable within contemporary humanities scholarship that has seen a shift from Said’s focus on discourse to an interest in multiplicity. Indeed, most academics today would probably agree with James Clifford that Said’s theory falls short in its understanding of culture simply as hegemonic and disciplinary instead of differentiating and expressive.⁵⁰ At the same time, much Arctic scholarship remains in practice more concerned with demonstrating the existence of discourse than investigating or uncovering alternative and co-existing ideas. Key notions are often thus the likes of ‘continuity’, ‘persistence’ and ‘stereotype’.

The benefits of transferring Said to Arctic studies are that his method of textual analysis helps us uncover how Western cultural expressions of the Arctic (in art, literature and science) were entangled in imperialist discourses. Bloom and Hill have aptly demonstrated that representations of the Arctic, Inuit and explorer created at certain points or by specific people evolved into ‘truths’ and contributed to the construction of national (male) identities that enabled and naturalised Western politics of imperialism and colonisation. As their studies have shown, Said’s method

the Inuit. In contrast to a foregoing attitude of technological supremacy, he believes Britain’s failure encouraged greater respect for Inuit knowledge and technology, finding evidence for this in juvenile literature. Riffenburgh has additionally claimed that the mid nineteenth century presented a change in perceptions of the Arctic landscape. For centuries the Arctic had been imagined as a sublime place, created by God for its wonder, beauty and fascination. Knowledge of the fate of the Franklin expedition, however, eliminated ideas about the Arctic sublime – the ‘horror’ of the Arctic had moved too close and become too real. See Hill, 2008, pp. 17-19; David, 2000, pp. 14-15, 176, 195-219, 228; Riffenburgh, 1994, p. 31.

⁴⁸ Grace, 2002, pp. 1, 23-30.

⁴⁹ See Ryall, et al., 2010, pp. x-xi.

⁵⁰ Clifford, 1988, p. 263.

may bring out the ways in which representations of the Arctic in Britain, like the imagined Orient, functioned as an element of colonial domination.

However, Said's strict thesis leaves no room to discuss the representations that did not fit within a given discourse. His insistence on a hermetic, all-pervasive discourse of Orientalism may – as James Clifford has convincingly argued – wrongfully ignore or downplay evidence of 'sympathetic' and 'nonreductive' ways of thinking.⁵¹ Said's method, which genealogically and deductively describes the structures of a discourse that has persisted for centuries, does not appreciate that other trends, perspectives and ideas may also have existed. The cost of this approach is an insufficient consideration for context that may result in a distortion of individuals, institutions and events, what Daniel M. Varisco singles out as one of the main problems with *Orientalism*.⁵² The danger of using Said's method is thus, as Clifford argues, a 'hermeneutical short-circuit in which the critic discovers in his topic what he has already put there'. If we commit fully to Said, in other words, it 'becomes difficult to escape the bleak though rigorous conclusion that all human expression is ultimately determined by cultural "archives"'.⁵³

One possible way out of the 'short circuit' of Orientalism is to consider representations produced in or affected by what Mary Louise Pratt calls the 'contact zone' and Stephanie Pratt terms the 'middle ground'.⁵⁴ Though not identical, these terms serve to similarly complicate notions of discourse, suggesting ways in which we might modify or even dispense with Said, focusing attention instead – or also – on circumstances in which the other might have had the possibility to 'talk back' and influence Western thought.

Mary Louise Pratt uses the notion of contact zone to describe social spaces of imperial encounters, whether between coloniser and colonised or traveller and

⁵¹ Clifford, 1988, p. 261. For a discussion of scholars who may have been wrongfully categorised as 'orientalists' by Said, see Hourani, 8 March 1979. For a revisionist approach to Said in the specific context of art history see MacKenzie, 1995.

⁵² Varisco, 2007, p. 8.

⁵³ Clifford, 1988, pp. 260, 262.

⁵⁴ Pratt, 2008 (1992), p. 7; Pratt, 2005, p. 7.

‘travelee’ (Pratt’s word), that for her are often characterised by highly asymmetrical power relations.⁵⁵ A conscious move away from the term ‘colonial frontier’, which, Pratt argues, is grounded in a European expansionist perspective, the contact zone by contrast emphasises the co-presence, interaction, improvisation and interconnectedness of understandings between Europeans and non-Westerners.⁵⁶

While contact zone functions for Mary Louise Pratt in rather broad terms, Stephanie Pratt develops a similar way of thinking with reference to a specific pre-colonised territory. In the context of her research on British eighteenth-century images of American Indians, she defines the middle ground as the space between American Indian and European territories in the New World. In this space, which was neither European nor Indian, a hybridized culture developed that was characterised by a certain amount of coexistence between the two groups, as opposed to the total domination of one culture over another. Arguing that ‘We can profitably dispense with the idea that every image of an American Indian is inevitably of a noble savage’, Pratt demonstrates that a consideration of the middle ground reveals alternatives to the ‘us’/‘them’ dichotomies typical of the type of cultural analysis advocated by Said: ‘the construction of race in European visual culture was not inevitably or solely a process of imposing a set of European values on another culture without resistance’.⁵⁷ Instead of a hermetic discourse, Pratt finds that the complexities of the middle ground affected British responses to American Indians. Thus, stereotypical images of the noble or ignoble ‘savage’ circulated alongside and simultaneously with representations of American Indians as named individuals, actively participating in contemporary history.⁵⁸

Although similar in their ambitions, contact zone and middle ground present two distinct ways of thinking that may prove more beneficial than Said’s theory of Orientalism. While Stephanie Pratt’s study brings attention to how the middle ground

⁵⁵ Pratt, 2008 (1992), pp. 7-8.

⁵⁶ Pratt, 2008 (1992), p. 8.

⁵⁷ Pratt, 2005, p. 7.

⁵⁸ Pratt, 2005, p. 7.

produced European images outside the dominating discourse on others, Mary Louise Pratt investigates the role of the other in the contact zone.

Unlike Said, Mary Louise Pratt does not assume that non-Westerners made no impact, even through direct contact or the production of counter-narratives. By contrast, she argues that this perception of history is a myth: 'If one studies only what the Europeans saw and said, one reproduces the monopoly on knowledge and interpretation that the imperial enterprise sought. This is a huge distortion, because of course that monopoly did not exist'.⁵⁹ In this context, Mary Louise Pratt introduces 'transculturation' – a term which she borrows from ethnography – as methodological evidence to describe how marginal or subordinate groups select and transform material imposed upon them by a dominant culture. Transculturation is crucially something that happens in the contact zone, with the concept drawing particular attention to the agency of peoples subjected to imperialism. Rather than passive bystanders or indeed victims of circumstances in which they ultimately have no say, 'People on the receiving end of European imperialism' are instead understood as dynamic individuals with powers of self-determination, capable of diverse forms of 'knowing and interpreting': While subjugated peoples cannot readily control what the dominant culture visits upon them, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own, how they use it, and what they make it mean'.⁶⁰

The alternative viewpoints presented by Mary Louise Pratt and Stephanie Pratt are most useful to this thesis when used in conjunction with – rather than in place of – a conception of discourse. Arctic discourses are certainly bound up in scientific, imperialist and masculine discourses, as has been well documented by other scholars, whose finds are not in question here. At the same time it needs to be made clear that this thesis *does not* apply Said's theory to analyses of Arctic images. Although the central question of this thesis surely draws attention to the significance of discourse theory – namely by asking if there was a unified view of the Arctic in the period

⁵⁹ Pratt, 2008 (1992), p. 7.

⁶⁰ Pratt, 2008 (1992), p. 7.

relevant to 1818-1859 – this study remains critical to the idea of an Arctic discourse equal to the closed, all-encompassing doctrine of Orientalism, as argued for by Said.

On the other hand, an over-emphasis on ideas like hybridity and multiplicity (which are in many ways implicit in notions such as contact zone, middle ground and transculturation) may also prove problematic. Although such conceptual frameworks can be valuable when attempting to give voice and agency to subjugated peoples, these ways of thinking might unknowingly underestimate the control and power of the coloniser. Christopher L. Miller takes up precisely this point, arguing that academic appetite for *en vogue* terminology like ‘hybridity’ runs the risk of falsifying history: ‘It may seem to be a more sophisticated academic stance to see the history of colonialism as “in reality...discontinuous and plural in its formation,” but when the colonizer’s boot is on your neck, are you likely to find it so?’⁶¹ If the danger of applying Said’s theory is the construction of a discourse on the West, alternate notions such as hybridity run the risk of minimising the hegemonic forces of imperialism. As Miller argues, the Western attempt to create monolithic discourses cannot be ignored in scholarly analyses of colonial representations, whether orientalist or otherwise.⁶²

Without dismissing the existence and workings of a discourse tied to Britain’s search for a Northwest Passage in the early to mid nineteenth century, it is necessary however to establish the particularities of the Arctic context. As has been noted already, the Arctic did not follow straightforward patterns of imperialism – it was not knowingly depleted of its inhabitants and natural resources, remaining primarily an ‘unknown’ to all but seasonal whalers and explorers. The ‘will’ to dominate the East, which Said argues made Orientalism possible, is thus an element missing from the Arctic. There is also a clear difference between the East and the Arctic in terms of the nature of their relationship with Europe throughout history. Well before the nineteenth century, Europe had already established strong ties with the East that were further strengthened in the nineteenth century through colonisation and tourism. As

⁶¹ Miller, 1998, pp. 3-4.

⁶² Miller, 1998, pp. 3-4.

Said argues, this long period of engagement generated a vast body of representations. By contrast, very few people travelled to the Arctic, and those who did make the voyage were almost exclusively men: commercial whalers, explorers employed by the Royal Navy, traders, trappers and surveyors for the Hudson Bay Company.

Thus, while Orientalism emerged out of a vast accumulation of knowledge, understandings of the Arctic were by contrast based on a very limited number of references. A result of this circumstance was that people attempting to represent the Arctic had very few sources upon which to draw, and the sources that did exist were often of poor quality. Many explorers were at best amateur artists, who produced 'images' of restricted value and quality. Indeed, a number of these images may often have been too difficult for a viewer to comprehend.⁶³ Compounding this problem was the fact that the Arctic was, in reality, really very different. In the nineteenth century, the architecture, infrastructure, religion, political and social organisation of the Orient offered clear gauges against which the West could compete with and compare itself. Due to many basic similarities with Europe, the Orient could be represented through existing genres and visual codes. The Arctic lacked this crucial ingredient of equivalence. Its profound difference, climatically, environmentally and culturally, presented a severe challenge to those seeking to make the Arctic 'visible'.⁶⁴

Within the context of the theoretical framework mapped out above, the intent with this thesis is to question and establish levels of degree – namely, the degree to which hegemonic forces existed and were articulated in a given colonial situation (the Arctic) and, on the other hand, the degree to which alternative images were present and might have impacted a particular discourse (in Britain).⁶⁵ To this end, the thesis builds on Stephanie Pratt's and Mary Louise Pratt's concepts of 'middle ground' and 'contact zone' to develop analyses of not only images that were pure 'imaginings', but a range of images that were produced in the various spaces of interaction

⁶³ David, 2000, p. 247.

⁶⁴ David makes a similar point, arguing that 'truth' in representations might be more difficult to achieve in totally unfamiliar surroundings than in the partially familiar. David, 2000, p. 12.

⁶⁵ Miller, 1998, p. 4.

inhabited by both Western and Inuit individuals. This approach accommodates images produced in the Arctic by Western artists, as well as images produced in Britain by artists who had direct contact with Inuit individuals and finally, images produced by Inuit who worked within a British setting. It is hoped that such an approach will serve to enrich and nuance current understandings of the Arctic and, if possible, bring out some aspects of Inuit points of view.

To date historians, biographers and scholars of Arctic exploration have largely excluded – whether intentionally or not – Inuit perspectives from their research. While Western representations of the Arctic in the nineteenth century are routinely criticised in recent scholarship, most writers make little attempt to include alternative viewpoints in their work. In theorising the hegemonic and in most cases negative stereotypes of Arctic landscapes and peoples, scholars offer scant evidence to counterbalance this dominating Western narrative beyond the limits of their own critique. As David self-critically and quite rightly points out, the history of Arctic indigenous peoples has been left almost solely to archaeologists and anthropologists.⁶⁶ Like David's work, and that of the majority of scholars writing on the Arctic today, this thesis is fundamentally about Western representations. It nonetheless attempts, if sporadically, a discussion of Inuit peoples and perspectives. Thus, although the thesis does not offer or propose to lay claim to an alternative (art) history of the Arctic, it does strategically and knowingly explore the possibility of counter narratives. While the task of discovering and documenting instances of counter narratives is arguably a methodological challenge in itself – and one that remains beyond the scope of this thesis – it is a central premise of this research that attempting to include other voices is important. Despite the limitations in this area that are certainly present in the current work, this thesis still seeks to demonstrate that uncovering and writing about non-Western perspectives is at least partly possible.

⁶⁶ David, 2000, p. 3.

The Arctic and Visual Culture 1818-1859 – A Cultural and Historical Framework

Arctic exploration in the early and mid nineteenth century coincided with something of a boom in the production of visual representations, and there is a noticeable shift in this time period from the primarily text-based accounts of the Arctic that had previously been available.⁶⁷ Constantine John Phipps's account of his voyage towards the North Pole in 1773, for example, includes numerous charts but is illustrated with only one engraving, *The Racehorse and Carcass Forcing through the Ice*, showing two vessels on an icy sea near the shore.⁶⁸ By contrast, Ross's narrative of his First Voyage, published just forty-five years later, contains twenty-one illustrations of which thirteen are in colour.⁶⁹ In one sense little had changed in that the Arctic was still, as it had been previously, a largely unknown and rarely visited region, and while expedition narratives were richly illustrated with coloured prints, these were often of poor quality.⁷⁰ Despite the topicality and currency of the region to British society, the amount of traditional genre and landscape paintings of the Arctic, or with an Arctic theme, remained rather low.

In fact, the majority of paintings produced in the period connected to Britain's search for a Northwest Passage between 1818 and 1859 that can be connected to the Arctic were portraits of explorers, such as John R. Wildman's portrait of James Clark Ross, James Green's portrait of John Ross and Stephen Pearce's portraits of McClintock, McClure and William Penny (**Figs. 1.1-1.5**). In these works, the Arctic – a wholly imagined landscape for the portrait painters – was not however the focus, but rather a foil serving to emphasise the bravery of the explorer pictured.

⁶⁷ Loomis, 1977, p. 97.

⁶⁸ Mulgrave, 1775, p. 70.

⁶⁹ Ross, 1819.

⁷⁰ David, 2000, pp. 6-8.

There were nonetheless a few Arctic landscapes painted by professional artists in this time period. The Royal Academy exhibition of 1860, for example, included a painting by Edward William Cooke titled *HMS Terror in the Ice of Frozen Strait*; although now lost, the work is meant to have shown one of Franklin's vessels wintering in the ice.⁷¹ Alongside Landseer's well-known *Man Proposes – God Disposes*, discussed in detailed in the following chapter, Cooke's lost work remains one of the only other documented landscape paintings by a professional British artist that explicitly treated Arctic exploration. There was, by contrast, another category of Arctic landscape painting that, wholly removed from Britain's search for a Northwest Passage, did have some currency. Working in Hull, the chief whaling port in Britain during the first few decades of the nineteenth century, a group of marine painters produced a number of views of the Davis Strait fishery.⁷² Commissioned by captains, ship owners and other investors in this fishery, these paintings typically reflected the commercial interests of their buyers. Thomas Binks's *The 'Jane', 'Viewforth' and ' Middleton' Fast in Ice* of about 1835 and John Ward's *The Swan and Isabella* of about 1830 – which may have been accepted for the Royal Academy exhibition of 1840 – reveal an interest in accurate delineations of vessels and seem intent on giving positive representations of whaling (**Figs. 1.6, 1.7**).⁷³ In contrast to the typically sublime Arctic found in most representations of exploration produced by professional painters throughout Europe, these images are filled with vessels, boats and people working in calm, reassuring and 'industrial' seascapes.

Unlike Cook's voyages to the Pacific in the late eighteenth century, the Admiralty did not furnish nineteenth-century Arctic expeditions with professional artists, and the resulting lack of access to the region (for anyone beyond the explorers) may explain the apparent anomaly. Indeed, the Admiralty did not think it necessary, in general, to send professionals to the Arctic at all. Rather, in a bid to avoid conflicts and focus attention on its primary objective of finding a Northwest Passage, the Admiralty considered it sufficient that naval officers and surgeons should double as

⁷¹ Munday, 1996, pp. 193-194.

⁷² Credland, 1982, p. 9.

⁷³ Credland, 1993, p. 64.

both scientific observers and artists.⁷⁴ Although certain officers such as George Back, Robert Hood and George Francis Lyon were considered competent or even good draughtsmen, the Admiralty's instructions to Ross in 1818 show that the primary rationale for producing visual records during Arctic expeditions was for the purposes of navigation:

whenever you may be impeded by ice, or find it necessary to approach the coasts of the continent or islands, you are to cause views of bays, harbours, headlands, &c., to be carefully taken, to illustrate and explain the track of the vessels, or such charts as you may be able to make: on which duty, you will be assisted by Lieutenant Hoppner, whose skill in drawing is represented to be so considerable, as to supersede the necessity of appointing a professional draughtsman.⁷⁵

Hiring artists was, in other words, superfluous. This comes in sharp contrast to the stance taken by the Admiralty during the time of Cook's Second Voyage to the Pacific, when it acquired at least twenty-four of William Hodges's oil paintings of lush, tropical landscapes. Beyond the very pragmatic approach suggested by the Admiralty's instructions to Ross, it may be that the Admiralty was not interested in paintings of an area popularly thought to be unpleasant, un-picturesque and un-aesthetic. Whatever the Admiralty's reasons, the particularity of the Arctic may explain why very few artists attempted to paint it, not even by using secondary sources (regardless of their quality). It would seem that the few British artists who did try to imagine the Arctic would most likely have struggled to represent an environment so different from anything with which they were familiar.

⁷⁴ Trevor H. Levere explains that science's subordination to naval control since Cook's voyages was, at least in part, connected to past experience of problems between civilian naturalists and naval officers. In 1698, the Admiralty had given Edmond Halley, a fellow of the Royal Society of London, his first naval command of an expedition to the south Atlantic. It ended in disaster. Conflicting interests and the disrespect the other officers had for Halley as a captain resulted in a mass court martial when the expedition returned. The fact that a Fellow of the Royal Society court-martialled all his officers did not sit well with the Admiralty and was not easily forgotten. A similar conflict happened following Cook's First Voyage when Joseph Banks – employed as Cook's naturalist – was subsequently replaced by two less demanding naturalists after having complained about the lack of promised space and assistants. See Levere, 1993, pp. 29-34, 43, 50, 76.

⁷⁵ Ross, 1819, p. 11.

In contrast to the realm of high art, the Arctic appeared frequently in the great popular exhibitions – panoramas and dioramas, as well as ‘peristrepic’ or moving panoramas – that were a feature of nineteenth-century cities in Britain, including London, Bristol, Bath and Edinburgh. Although on-the-spot sketches produced by Arctic explorers were of varied and in most cases low artistic quality, such field drawings were highly valued as source-material by the entrepreneurs of popular exhibitions that looked to capitalise on the interest in Arctic expeditions at the time. This is probably due to the fact that panoramas and their like relied primarily on claims to truthfulness for success, generally aiming to give the spectator a feeling of being present at the scene displayed. Field drawings seem to have played a central role here, with their original documentary function lending credibility to advertisements that commonly implied popular shows were the closest the viewer would ever get to the real thing. Whatever the reason, they attracted crowds of people at a time, and the spectacular nature of these displays – which sometimes included sound and light effects – must have made a strong impression on popular perceptions of the Arctic in Britain during the first half of the nineteenth century.

In addition to featuring in book illustrations, paintings and popular exhibitions, the Arctic was further caught up in a range of other types of media, including public monuments, displays of living ‘savages’, illustrated newspapers (such as the *Illustrated London News* and *Penny Weekly*) and museum displays.⁷⁶ Together with photography, other forms of museum exhibitions also emerged and added to the visualisation of the Arctic in the later nineteenth century. Thus, despite the modest role played by high art painting during the years connected to Britain’s search for a Northwest Passage between 1818 and 1859, the quantity of other visual material that emerged in this time period, as well as its prominent place in society at large, suggests that the Arctic was, as David argues, a central and embedded ‘part of the

⁷⁶ An upturn in the frequency of Arctic imagery in illustrated dailies and weeklies (which resulted from technological improvements in the printing press at mid-century) coincides with the Franklin search expeditions. See David, 2000, p. 81. While museum displays of Arctic fauna and ethnography postdate the period relevant to 1818 to 1859, objects retrieved from the Franklin expedition by John Rae in 1854 and the later search expeditions were exhibited in Britain at the end of the 1850s.

collective imagination, no less significant to that era than the exoticism of the Orient or the darkness at the heart of Africa'.⁷⁷

A History of Representation of non-Western Peoples

Although the visual material discussed in this thesis can be situated in varying historical lineages, one tradition of particular importance to some, but not all, of this material is what Smith and Rüdiger Joppien label the 'ethnographic convention'.⁷⁸ Tentatively tracing this term back as far as Antiquity, Joppien and Smith find this representational mode being turned to 'wherever the foreigner needs to be specified'. Its primary characteristics are a focus on costume and adornment combined with a minimal interest in, or altogether lack of, landscape or background. The result is, accordingly, a schematic form of representation that presents 'the human figure of the foreigner' as a 'type-specimen'.⁷⁹ The ethnographic convention tends not to emphasise differences in physiognomy, but instead operates overtop of existing European stylistic conventions. Renderings of the human body rooted in 'Christian and classical heritage' thus function like diagrams upon which the artist might simply record particularities of ornamentation and dress.⁸⁰ Following the discovery of the Americas, this approach to representation received new force, with drawing based on direct studies of nature becoming an important means for conveying information in the encounter with previously unknown lands and peoples.

While examples of imagery employing the ethnographic convention abound, the majority of images dating to the earliest phase of contact with the New World are reproductions of field drawings, with very few originals surviving. Although he does not really provide convincing evidence to support his claim, Smith argues that between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries first-hand drawings were not considered important and that greater value was placed instead on the graphic

⁷⁷ David, 2000, p. 6.

⁷⁸ Joppien and Smith, 1985, p. 6. See also Smith, 1992, pp. 79-80

⁷⁹ Joppien and Smith, 1985, pp. 6-7.

⁸⁰ Joppien and Smith, 1985, p. 8.

reproductions and paintings these inspired.⁸¹ Whatever the reason, the artists and engravers that made use of these now lost sources tended to freely alter the originals. As a result, European characteristics were frequently added, such as long curly hair and a beard on an engraving of an American Indian in Amerigo Vespucci's *Mundus Novus* of 1505 and European tools and implements in some of the engravings produced for Theodore de Bry's multi-volume *America*.⁸² Mid fifteenth-century paintings such as Jan Mostaert's *A West Indian Scene*, and the figure of the devil in a Portuguese work entitled *Inferno* illustrate how images based on original field drawings were often further infused with religious, commercial and political motives (**Figs. 1.8, 1.9**). Secondary representations thus frequently conflated and reduced cultural diversity into simple polarities, for example by invoking notions of the American Indian as either simple and innocent or, conversely, as infernal and cannibal.⁸³ Similar ideas were also present in first-hand accounts, however. Jacques Le Moyne's drawing of half-naked Timucuan worshipping a French column is a case in point (**Fig. 1.10**). In its Arcadian serenity, the image seems to suggest these newfound lands were ripe for European settlement and colonisation.⁸⁴

Two of the most valuable examples of early work using the ethnographic convention are thus Christoph Weiditz's drawings of a group of Mexicans brought to Spain by Cortés in 1528 and John White's late sixteenth-century drawings of Inuit and the Algonquian Indians.⁸⁵ Beyond their uniqueness as surviving artefacts from this time period, Weiditz's and White's images are noteworthy for their apparent interest in accurately depicting dress and adornment. White's images, particularly his drawings of the Algonquian, are arguably the more important.⁸⁶ While Weiditz's sketches

⁸¹ Smith, 1992, pp. 10, 13-14.

⁸² Honour, 1976, p. 11; Smith, 1992, p. 13. For example engravings based on Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues's first-hand drawings of Timucuan in Florida.

⁸³ Honour, 1976, pp. 56-57; Smith, 1992, p. 10.

⁸⁴ Smith, 1992, p. 14. Much the same happens in textual representations of the New World. Christopher Columbus's letters for example describe Cuba as an ideal landscape, a golden land reminiscent of ancient Greece. See Honour, 1976, p. 5

⁸⁵ Honour, 1976, pp. 60-62.

⁸⁶ This is especially true in a British context. As Stephanie Pratt goes to lengths to emphasise, White and his work have a 'special status' in scholarship today, laying claim to a number of 'firsts': he was part of the 'first organized English attempt to

were made in Spain, the substantial body of watercolours White produced during Sir Walter Raleigh's 1585 expedition to 'Virginia' (Roanoke, North Carolina) were executed in the field. They thus constitute a major contribution to empirical naturalism in late sixteenth-century ethnographic imaging.

About eight years before travelling to Roanoke, White created two portraits of three Inuit – a man, woman and her child – that had been captured in Baffin Bay by Martin Frobisher's expedition and brought to England in 1577 (**Figs. 1.11, 1.12**). It is uncertain whether White took part in Frobisher's expedition or if the portraits were created after the Inuit arrived in Bristol, however, and these images cannot therefore be assuredly categorised as field drawings (in the sense of being drawn in the Arctic).⁸⁷ While the man's face and moustache look European, both images bear witness to White's interest in recording details of Inuit material culture, as seen from the attention paid to the rendering of the texture, materials, construction and form of the parkas. The woman's facial tattoo and the baby carried in her hood are further examples of the empirical quality and ethnographic value of White's work. Rather than focusing on the personality of the particular individuals, White employed the ethnographic convention, his 'practice of generification' – a term used by Christian F. Feest – emphasising dress and adornment.⁸⁸ The drawings do not include personal names and all landscape attributes that might locate or define the individuals represented are absent, suggesting that White's aim was to produce an Inuit 'type'.⁸⁹

Unlike the reproductions of White's later drawings of the Algonquian, his images of the three Inuit brought back to Bristol by Frobisher (or reproductions of these) were

permanently settle with Native North Americans in their own locale; White being the first English artist taken abroad specifically for the role of making a visual record; these ventures being some of the first of Elizabeth's reign to make land claims in the so-called 'New World' of America; and these images being among some of the earliest ever devised by an English artist of the natives of North America.' Pratt, 2009, p. 33.

⁸⁷ Feest, 2007, p. 72.

⁸⁸ Feest, 2007, p. 70.

⁸⁹ These Inuit are named in other sources as Kalicho, Arnaq and Nutaaq. See Feest, 2007, p. 70

not well known and, at best, only sporadically circulated.⁹⁰ In addition to the original watercolours, from which White created some copies, the drawings may have been used in a composite woodcut that illustrated at least three editions (in French, Italian and German) of Dionyse Settle's account of Frobisher's second voyage, published between 1578 and 1580. These prints show an Arctic landscape with Inuit figures, including a man in a kayak, with the two figures standing on the shore being reminiscent, although highly altered versions, of those featured in White's drawings (**Fig. 1.13**).⁹¹ White's image of the female Inuk may additionally have been used as basis for the composite allegorical scene of stained glass windows at Gorhambury, dated to 1610 at the latest.⁹² In the early eighteenth century, additional copies of White's Inuit drawings were made when Hans Sloane (1660-1753) commissioned watercolour reproductions for a volume that was first kept in Sloane's library and, later on, the British Museum.⁹³ The limited reproduction of White's Inuit drawings implies that any direct impact they may have had on later ethnographic representations of Inuit and other non-Western individuals was minimal.

The real importance of White in the lineage of the ethnographic convention thus manifests in his later watercolours of the Algonquian – or rather, reproductions of these – created about eight years after his Inuit drawings (**Figs. 1.14, 1.15**).⁹⁴ Together with natural scientist Thomas Harriot, White was engaged in documenting the local inhabitants and environment Raleigh's 1585 voyage encountered in its attempt to establish a British colony in the New World. Combining together textual and visual description, their work was published in Harriot's *A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia*, which was the first volume of de Bry's *America*. Herein, Harriot's descriptions of many different aspects of Algonquin culture accompany de Bry's engravings of White's images (**Figs. 1.16, 1.17**). Published in four different languages, de Bry's comprehensive account of the New World was the first to make American Indians widely known in Europe. Further copying of de Bry's

⁹⁰ Hulton, 1984, p. 22.

⁹¹ Hulton, 1984, p. 29.

⁹² Sloan, 2007, p. 168.

⁹³ Sloan, 2007, p. 165.

⁹⁴ Honour, 1976, p. 68.

reproductions of White's originals – termed 'White-De Bry derivatives' by Paul Hulton – went on to enjoy enormous popularity throughout the next three centuries.⁹⁵ This suggests that White, albeit anonymously, influenced not only European perceptions of American Indians, but future ethnographic representations of non-Western peoples more generally.⁹⁶

Rather than simply being numbered, as was the case with his drawings of Inuit, White's original watercolours of Algonquin include short, handwritten descriptions of the figures (or scenes) pictured – captions such as 'The aged man in his wynter garment', 'The wyfe of an Herowan of Pomeiooc' and 'One of their Religious men'.⁹⁷ This efficient labelling suggests White's primary interest was not in the individual personalities of the sitters – who are not given personal names, but are often described in terms of age and gender – but the 'type' they represented. Like plant- and animal images in natural history books of the time, or indeed those he produced for Raleigh's expedition, White's drawings are systematically composed and consistently presented so as to give as much information as possible, maximise legibility and allow for ease of comparison (**Fig. 1.18**). His images of people are thus full-length portraits, with the subject facing forward or turned slightly in profile, dressed and adorned with signifiers of their material culture. White used this approach to build up what Hulton calls 'his theatre of races', repeating the underlying schemata clearly used in the Algonquian and Inuit drawings to create strikingly similar images of peoples 'he could not observe and record himself'.⁹⁸ Whether producing images based on the work of other artists, such as Le Moyne's drawings of indigenous peoples in Florida, or purely on his imagination, such as his watercolours of Picts and ancient Britons, White seems to have used an established repertoire of postures (sometimes mirrored), which he simply dressed – as with his field drawings from life – in different costumes (**Figs. 1.19-1.21**). In this way White, who is also known to have rendered images of Turks, Greeks, Tartars and Brazilians,

⁹⁵ Hulton, 1984, p. 19; Feest, 2007, p. 76.

⁹⁶ Smith, 1992, pp. 16-17.

⁹⁷ See Hulton, 1984, pp. 64, 65, 72.

⁹⁸ Hulton, 1984, p. 22.

was simply partaking in the visual conventions of his time.⁹⁹ Many of White's contemporaries used a very similar pattern of representation when drawing non-Western individuals, whether from nature or from conjecture, as can be seen in works like Weiditz's *Mexicans* of 1529, Lucas de Heere's *An Eskimo* of 1576 and Hans Burgkmair's (the elder) *Standing black man dressed in a feather skirt* of about 1520 (**Figs. 1.22-1.24**).

Sixteenth-century artists like White, Weiditz, de Heere, Burgkmair and Le Moyne most likely looked to, as Feest has also argued, existing genres that systematised and ordered 'specimens' into comparable formats.¹⁰⁰ One clear model when it came to presenting human figures in particular was the 'costume book', a contemporaneous genre White both drew on and contributed to with his images of the Algonquian – which were reproduced in Pietro Bertelli's *Diversarum nationum habitus* of 1594, for example (**Fig. 1.25**).¹⁰¹ The costume book was a continental European genre that became popular in the second half of the sixteenth century. Initially concerned with the different dress codes in the countries and cities of Europe, by the second half of the sixteenth century such books also included examples of dress and adornment from the East and the Americas.¹⁰² Closely related to costume books were the 'Cries', a genre that originated in Paris in 1500 and became an established tradition throughout Europe by the mid sixteenth century.¹⁰³ Both genres shared a common visual language, with Cesare Vecellio's *De gli habiti antichi et moderni di diverse parti del mondo* of 1590 and Marcellus Laroon's *The Cryes of the City of London drawne after the Life*, first published in 1687, similarly employing the ethnographic convention to present human individuals as specimens or nameless 'types', partly or wholly separated from any social or environmental context (**Figs. 1.26, 1.27**). Yet, while the intention of the costume books was to provide a systematised visual understanding of other European and non-Western peoples, the object of the Cries was by comparison to make sense of urban 'others' – meaning the lower orders of

⁹⁹ See Hulton, 1984, pp. 97-101.

¹⁰⁰ Feest, 2007, pp. 68, 76.

¹⁰¹ Feest, 2007, pp. 68, 76.

¹⁰² Feest, 2007, p. 68; Sloan, 2007, p. 150.

¹⁰³ Shesgreen, 2002, p. 2.

society such as hawkers and their like.¹⁰⁴ Illustrated books of Cries flourished particularly well in Britain, where their popularity continued well into the nineteenth century – Laroon’s drawings, for example, ‘were engraved, issued and reissued by various booksellers until 1821’.¹⁰⁵

Moving on from the earliest depictions of native peoples in the New World produced by artists such as White in the sixteenth century, the continuation of the ethnographic convention in the seventeenth century may be evidenced in engravings of Albert Eckhout’s drawings of Brazilians produced about 150 years later (**Figs. 1.28, 1.29**). Reproduced as illustrations in Willem Pies’s and George Marcgraf’s *Historia naturalis Brasiliae* of 1648, these strongly modified copies of four of Eckhout’s original works show similarities with the images (or their reproductions) produced by earlier artists like Weiditz and de Heere – a repeating full-length figure facing forward or turned slightly towards the side, an absence of background, generic faces and a focus on material culture. Appearing after numerous illustrations of flora and fauna, the images are gathered together on two pages under the heading ‘the clothing and adornment of the men and women of Brazil’, suggesting that they were clearly intended, like the drawings of natural specimens that came before them, as type samples.¹⁰⁶

Eckhout’s original field drawings from Brazil and later paintings are, however, very different, appearing somewhat out of step with the standard rules governing the ethnographic convention (**Figs. 1.30-1.32**). Works like *A Tapuya Brazilian, Woman on Beach* and *Tapuya woman seated* exhibit a realism and sensitivity that seem to present to the viewer real and distinct individuals in their natural surroundings.¹⁰⁷ *Tapuya Dance*, a dynamic painting Eckhout based on field drawings achieves much the same, showing two women and eight men against a tropical background, their

¹⁰⁴ Shesgreen, 2002, p. 27.

¹⁰⁵ Shesgreen, 2002, pp. 3, 45.

¹⁰⁶ ‘De Vestitu & Ornatu Virorum, & Mulierem Brasiliensium’.

¹⁰⁷ Eckhout was part of a scientific team hired by Maurits van Nassau-Siegen, the Governor of the Dutch colony in Brazil, to research and document the flora, fauna and peoples found there. In carrying out this assignment, Eckhout further recorded at least one ritual of the Tapuya Indians. See Smith, 1992, pp. 18-22.

movements, physique, weapons, face and head decorations convincingly rendered as a realistic and detailed ethnographic study (**Fig. 1.33**). Eckhout's originals were not, however, as widely disseminated as the generalised illustrations that were included in Pies's and Marcgraf's book and, in turn, frequently copied. In addition to serving the needs of baroque art, the reproductions appearing in *Historia naturalis Brasiliae* may have influenced the formulation of later scientific accounts, such as those chronicling the discovery of 'new' lands a century later. Remaining an authoritative source until publications by Alexander von Humboldt in the early nineteenth century, *Historia naturalis Brasiliae* was for example part of the personal onboard library of Joseph Banks, the naturalist employed on Cook's First Voyage to the Pacific in 1768-1771.¹⁰⁸

While a line might be drawn from White and his contemporaries through to Eckhout, thereby suggesting an unbroken tradition for ethnographic documentation stretching back through the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, Bernard Smith has found that the works of these artists – all of whom drew from nature and in the field – were exceptions. According to him, there did not exist in Europe a real interest in producing accurate visual records of distant lands and peoples until the occurrence of Cook's voyages in the later eighteenth century. Smith argues that before this time it was highly uncommon for artists to take part in voyages of exploration as 'little value was placed upon the acquisition of accurate graphic information by most voyages of exploration'. Indeed, 'The little that did get drawn or painted seems to have been the product of fortunate accident'.¹⁰⁹ For Smith, therefore, it was the legacy left by Cook's voyages that would have the greatest impact on subsequent representations of exploration.

The eighteenth century witnessed great changes to the role played by visual records in the documentation of newfound territories and peoples. This change in status was rooted in an intellectual climate that, in turn, found its origins in Enlightenment thought, which looked to reason, experience and empirical evidence – instead of

¹⁰⁸ Smith, 1992, pp. 18, 22, 43.

¹⁰⁹ Smith, 1992, pp. 21, 52.

tradition, religion or myth – to explain and represent the natural world. Traces of this shift in worldview date back to the seventeenth century, which saw the emergence of thinkers such as Isaac Newton and John Locke and the establishment of the Royal Society of London and the Académie des Sciences in Paris.¹¹⁰ New approaches to understanding the natural world subsequently affected views on the meaning and purpose of art. While empirical naturalism had been employed in illustrations for natural history books since the fourteenth century, this mode of representation received great impetus after the publication of Carl Linné’s work in the eighteenth century. Linné advocated a systematic account of nature in the descriptive sciences, encouraging the development of empirical forms of naturalism in the visual arts.¹¹¹ Empirical naturalism was also promoted by George Edwards (1694-1774), an ornithologist and draughtsman who argued against ‘the traditional view of the artist as a visual poet and towards the view that the artist should serve the requirements of science’.¹¹² Both John Locke and Joseph Banks – who was in fact ‘an early English disciple of Linné’ – similarly championed art as a tool for eighteenth-century science and exploration, going as far as arguing that art was a more efficient and superior means of documentation than textual description.¹¹³ The impact of this development in thinking is evidenced already in 1665 when the Royal Society began providing voyages of exploration with instructions to keep graphic records of their journey.¹¹⁴ The British government also recognised the value of accurate visual information for the purposes of both national security and imperial expansion, establishing drawing schools for first the navy and later other military academies in the eighteenth century.¹¹⁵

In these contexts, Cook’s voyages were the first in a ‘new breed’ of expeditions that set a standard for making ‘full use of visual as well as verbal means for conveying

¹¹⁰ Holmes, 2009, p. xvi.

¹¹¹ Smith, 1992, p. 51

¹¹² Smith, 1992, pp. 35-36.

¹¹³ Smith, 1992, p. 43.

¹¹⁴ It took some time before these instructions would take hold. Smith, 1992, p. 52.

¹¹⁵ The first drawing school to train boys for the navy was established in 1693, with military academies later set up in Woolwich, Marlow, Sandhurst and Addiscombe. Smith, 1992, pp. 28-29.

the results of his observations'.¹¹⁶ Commenting on his hiring of John Webber as expedition artist for his Third Voyage, Cook reveals the era's interest in visual records that 'could only be executed by a professed and skilful artist', explaining how Webber had been 'pitched upon [...] for the express purpose of supplying the unavoidable imperfections of written accounts'.¹¹⁷ To this end Cook repeatedly engaged professional artists on his three voyages to the Pacific, resulting in a substantial amount of visual material including about three thousand original field drawings.¹¹⁸

In representing the people they encountered, the artists on Cook's voyages drew on the ethnographic convention used by earlier artists and engravers. This is seen for example in two watercolours of the first people Cook met with on his First Voyage, the Ona of Patagonia, executed by one of the expedition's two artists, Alexander Buchan (**Figs. 1.34, 1.35**). Buchan may have based these watercolours on engravings published in George Shelvocke's *A Voyage round the World* of 1726, which was part of the ship's library (**Fig. 1.36**).¹¹⁹

The many narratives that were published in the wake of Cook's voyages contain several full-length 'type' engravings similar to Buchan's watercolours of the Ona. At least five such images were included in the *Journal* published by Sydney Parkinson, the other artist employed on Cook's first expedition, in 1773; three more appear in the large folio *Atlas*, released by the Admiralty together with the three volume work *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* in 1784.¹²⁰ In an apparent deviation from the ethnographic convention, which tended toward full-length figures, the more frequent representational form appearing in the narratives was, however, the head and shoulder portrait. Buchan's watercolours of the Ona were, for example, turned into a

¹¹⁶ Joppien and Smith, 1985, p. ix.

¹¹⁷ Cook quoted in Nordyke, 2008, p. xxiv.

¹¹⁸ Smith, 1992, p. 51. Cook's three voyages were conducted between 1768 and 1780, employing the artists Alexander Buchan and Sydney Parkinson (First Voyage, 1768-1771), William Hodges (Second Voyage, 1772-1775) and John Webber (Third Voyage, 1776-1780).

¹¹⁹ Joppien and Smith, 1985, pp. 13-14.

¹²⁰ Nordyke, 2008, pp. 55, 58, 119; Joppien and Smith, 1985, pp. 22, 46, 114, 115, 197.

composite head and bust portrait in an engraving included as an illustration in Parkinson's *Journal* (**Fig. 1.37**). Like Buchan's original full-length figure drawings, most of these head and shoulder portraits nonetheless employ the ethnographic convention. Parkinson's *Portrait of a New Zealand Man* and an engraving of John Webber's *A Man of Nootka Sound* for example show an interest in the culturally specific adornments of the indigenous peoples encountered including tattoos, piercing, hair dos and decoration (**Figs. 1.38, 1.39**). Although Joppien and Smith state that the 'ethnographic convention did not, as used in Cook's day, stress physiognomical differences', some of the images resulting from Cook's voyages nonetheless seem to suggest the workings of an interest in physiognomy – the reproduction of Webber's *Man of Nootka Sound* is one example of this tendency, as is Thomas Chambers's engraving *Heads of divers Natives of the Islands of Otaheite, Huaheine, & Oheiteroach* (**Fig. 1.40**).¹²¹ This potential focus on the facial and bodily characteristics of at least certain ethnic groups seems further expressed in some of Cook's written descriptions of the peoples he encountered. His detailed text on the people inhabiting Nootka Sound goes to great lengths to comment on, amongst other things, their stature, facial structure, forehead, eyes, nose, mouth, hair, eyebrows, beard, neck, arms, body, feet, ankles, knees, proportioning and colour, concluding that 'Upon the whole, a very remarkable sameness seems to characterize the countenances of the whole nation; a dull phlegmatic want of expression, with very little variation, being strongly marked in all of them'.¹²²

Regardless of the degree to which Cook and his expedition artists may or may not have been concerned with physiognomy, it appears to be the case that not all of the expedition artists used the ethnographic convention. Although the illustrations in the narratives resulting from Cook's voyages do draw primarily on that mode of representation, there are important exceptions found in the original material produced by William Hodges, the artist of Cook's Second Voyage. In his many head and bust drawings from the field, Hodges seems to have succeeded in fusing ethnographic detail with the individual characteristics of his sitters. His portraits 'Tu,

¹²¹ Joppien and Smith, 1985a, p. 8.

¹²² Nordyke, 2008, p. 71.

king of Tahiti' and 'an old Maori man' both seem to capture their sitters at specific moments (**Figs. 1.41, 1.42**). When reproduced, this quality of Hodges's field drawings is lost, however. In the engraving *Otoo, King of Otaheite*, the subtlety and suggestiveness of Hodges's drawing of Tu is replaced by a flat and schematic representation. Despite the fact that it is captioned with Tu's name, this engraving suggests 'type' rather than individual (**Fig. 1.43**).

Alongside images of non-Western individuals, whether as full-length figures or as head and shoulder portraits, the artists on Cook's voyages employed another form of representation – called 'event scenes' – in their encounters with new peoples.

Encompassing a range of subjects, including ceremonies, games and forms of entertainment, this type of imagery – which also has a historical lineage tentatively stretching back to Europe's first phase of contact with the New World – was used in the documentation of episodes that took place in the various locations visited by Cook's expeditions.¹²³ One recurring 'event scene' that was of particular importance was what Smith labels 'encounter' drawings, an image type used by Cook's artists to capture his first meetings with the local inhabitants found at each new landfall.¹²⁴

First used by Buchan to document Cook's meeting with the Ona living at 'the Bay of Good Success', by the Third Voyage the 'encounter' drawing had been fully developed by Webber, embedded centrally within 'a well-thought-out programme to provide a systematic ethnographic account of the peoples encountered in the Pacific' (**Figs. 1.44, 1.45**).¹²⁵ In addition to systematically producing a visual record of each instance of contact, Webber made careful studies of a minimum of one local man and woman.

Cook's voyages were famous throughout Europe and, with his accomplishments being acknowledged by the public, scientists and seamen alike for decades after his death in 1779, Cook emerged as the prototypical hero of European imperialism.¹²⁶

¹²³ For examples of 'event' scenes of the Third Voyage, see Nordyke, 2008, pp. 23, 25, 27, 31, 35, 41, 53, 57, 97, 115, 135.

¹²⁴ Smith, 1992, p. 73.

¹²⁵ Smith, 1992, pp. 73-74.

¹²⁶ Smith, 1979, p. 160.

The visual material resulting from Cook's voyages also made a strong impact in Europe, with the post-Cook era seeing Cook's imagery – whether as engravings based on illustrations in his narratives or pirate copies of these – going on to dominate the many costume books that flourished on the Continent in the fifty years immediately following Cook's death.¹²⁷ Beyond the central importance of the Cook imagery to popular culture at large, the work of his expedition artists also set a new standard for the role of visual documentation in the service of exploration. The visual material resulting from Cook's voyages, together with the costume books and their like, was thus – most likely – a key reference point for much of the exploration imagery produced in the nineteenth century, including of course the British expeditions bound for the Northwest Passage between 1818 and 1859. Indeed, when Ross's First Voyage set sail for the Arctic in 1818, it had in its onboard library copies of 'Cook's Voyages' and 'Atlas', the latter containing sixty-one engraved plates based on Webber's field drawings.¹²⁸

The New Life Sciences of the Nineteenth Century

Nineteenth-century explorers continued the project of documenting foreign peoples and places undertaken by Cook and his predecessors. Through the images and texts they produced, and the natural specimens, material artefacts and living individuals with which they returned, nineteenth-century explorers thus participated in and contributed to a tradition for collecting ethnographic data extending as far back as Europe's earliest encounters with the New World in the sixteenth century. This data was of value for both public entertainment and scientific research, and in servicing these two arenas explorers played the role of quasi-scientists. While explorers often received membership in scientific organisations, including the Royal Society, Phrenological Society and Ethnological Society, professional practitioners in various

¹²⁷ Joppien, 1979, pp. 187, 210.

¹²⁸ See Ross, 1819, p. xvi. The sixth entry in the list of books aboard the *Isabella* printed at the start of Ross's narrative is most likely a reference to the three volumes of *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean* and its accompanying large folio *Atlas* published by the Admiralty in 1784. For reprints of all sixty-one images included in the *Atlas* see Nordyke, 2008.

fields used their finds, incorporating these into their research and scientific publications.¹²⁹ At the same time, some explorers also produced articles of their own that were published in scientific journals.¹³⁰ Just as previous images of exploration both took inspiration from and influenced the development of costume books, for example, nineteenth-century exploration was thus fully caught up in new developments in scientific thinking and the visualisation of these trends.

The period connected to Britain's search for a Northwest Passage between 1818 and 1859 comes before the emergence of modern anthropology as a discipline and, with it, a more uniform understanding of human history, diversity and the relationship between Europe and the peoples inhabiting other parts of the world. Before the crystallisation of anthropology in the 1860s and 1870s, which coincided with a clear definition of the 'primitive' based on Darwin's theory of evolution, the life sciences were characterised not by an established, unified discourse but by multiple, changing and competing points of view.¹³¹

The voyages of exploration to the New World in the 1500s shook Europe's existing world-view, which held 'that God had created the world once and for all and given its inhabitants their particular natures, which they had since retained'.¹³² History was, in other words, primarily understood in terms of the Genesis – all men descended from Adam and the variety of peoples could be traced back to the three sons of Noah. In the logic of this biblical view, ethnic difference was accounted for by the belief that the original human condition was more or less equivalent to that of present-day Europeans, but that non-Western others, such as the Chinese or

¹²⁹ This is evidenced in the Arctic context. Franklin, Parry and James Clark Ross were Fellows of the Royal Society, John Ross a Corresponding Member of the Phrenological Society and Richard King one of the founders of the Ethnological Society. For examples of publications using explorers' accounts of Inuit see *Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* 1824; Cox, 1834 (1833)-a.

¹³⁰ Arctic explorers Richard King and Peter C. Sutherland, both of whom were also medical doctors, published articles on Inuit. John Ross published at least one article in the *Phrenological Journal* (on a non-Arctic theme). Sutherland, 1856; King, 1848; Ross, 1824.

¹³¹ Kuper, 1988, pp. 1-2.

¹³² Eriksen and Nielsen, 2001, p. 6.

Oriental, had deteriorated into various degrees of ‘savagery’. Although it would not come to be named as such until the nineteenth century, this way of thinking can usefully be termed ‘degenerationism’.

Knowledge of a whole continent and its inhabitants that were not even mentioned in the Bible posed previously unasked questions about the history and diversity of mankind, prompting ideas about progress, development and the influence of the environment on the social and physical character of a people. Evidence of these new directions in thinking include Michel de Montaigne’s radical and remarkably early vein of ‘cultural relativism’, and the ideas of Isaac de La Peyrère, an early advocate of polygenism who proposed in his *Praeadamitae* of 1655 that the people in the New World did not descend from Adam, but were proof of mankind’s plural origins.¹³³ The work of these writers and others were a minority, however, and although they would have some influence on the thinking of later centuries, the biblical view was not seriously challenged until the Enlightenment, when European scientists and philosophers tried more emphatically to understand and sort the physical and cultural variety of humankind.

The Enlightenment witnessed the emergence of a clear alternative to the belief in degenerationism that had governed European thought for centuries. This alternative way of thinking, which can be labelled ‘developmentalism’ from our point of view today, circulated in the writings of men such as Lord Kames, Adam Smith and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, who moved away from biblical notions to an understanding of human history as progressing from an original ‘savage’ condition to a ‘civilised’ one. Although development was usually seen as a positive progression, thus revealing similarities with the underlying assumption of European superiority embedded in degenerationist thought, this was not always the case. Unlike many of his contemporaries, Rousseau for example argued that the development from ‘savage’ to ‘civilised’ eventually resulted in decay. For Rousseau, ideal society was to be found among the ‘noble savages’ of the New World, while modern society – in Rousseau’s

¹³³ Stocking, 1987, p. 12.

case, contemporary France – was corrupt and decadent.¹³⁴ The same notions were present among Scottish enlightenment thinkers, including Lord Kames and Adam Ferguson, who bemoaned the loss of ‘manly virtues [...] to the development of commercial and industrialised society’.¹³⁵

Existing side by side throughout the eighteenth century, both the long-standing degenerationist and the emergent developmentalist traditions were on the whole egalitarian in their view on human variety. These two intellectual lineages believed in a common origin for humankind and tended to view difference as environmentally or socially conditioned. Degenerationists and developmentalists thus similarly believed that the intellectual capacity and therefore potential to become civilised was more or less the same for all.¹³⁶ These lines of thought carried over into the next century, where they continued to develop and compete with each other. With each passing decade of the nineteenth century, however, important changes began to take hold. While the movement from ‘savage’ to ‘civil’ was increasingly viewed in terms of true progress by developmentalists, both they and degenerationists – despite their opposing points of view – similarly shifted away from notions of universalism and egalitarianism, emphasising instead Europe’s difference and separation from contemporary ‘savages’.¹³⁷

The essential differences between nineteenth-century developmentalism and degenerationism are in any case apparent in a lengthy discussion on the origin of the ‘savage state’ published in the 1823 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Contesting notions of ‘natural progress’, the entry argues that nineteenth-century ‘savages’ had degenerated from an original ‘civilised condition’. Staunchly defending the degenerationist position, the article begins by outlining the main points in the Genesis before proceeding to an angry rejection of the currently ‘fashionable’

¹³⁴ Eriksen and Nielsen, 2001, pp. 11-12.

¹³⁵ Stocking, 1987, p. 17.

¹³⁶ Stocking, 1987, pp. 16-17.

¹³⁷ Stocking, 1987, pp. 25-26.

ideas of the developmentalists – namely, that Europeans were once like the present ‘savages’.¹³⁸

How these facts can be reconciled to a state of ignorant savagism is to us absolutely inconceivable; and it is indeed strange, that men who profess Christianity should appeal to reason, and stick by its decision on a question which revelation has thus plainly decided against them [...] To us [...] it appears equally plausible that our first parents were created, not in full maturity, but mere infants, and that they went through the tedious process of childhood and youth, &c. as to suppose that their minds were created weak, uninformed, and uncivilized, as are those of savages.¹³⁹

The entry continues with this type of logic, referring to multiple examples in the Old Testament of ‘highly civilised’ societies in an attempt to disprove the ‘modern advocates for the universality of the savage state’. Championing the degenerationist stance, the entry concludes that the ‘origin of savagism, if we allow mankind to have been at first civilized, is easily accounted for by natural means: The origin of civilization, if at any period the whole race were savages, cannot [...] be accounted for otherwise than by a miracle’.¹⁴⁰

Implicated in this ongoing debate between degenerationists and developmentalists were comparative anatomy and phrenology – two of the emerging life sciences of the new century. While rather different in their scope, these disciplines nonetheless shared a common impulse to view humankind’s diversity in terms of separateness. Their preoccupation with classification, in particular the organisation of data according to physical appearance, seems to similarly suggest that differences between nineteenth-century Europeans and ‘savages’ were typically conceived of as being rather permanent.¹⁴¹

The desire to separate between Europeans and ‘savages’ is evident in the work of the French naturalist and zoologist Georges Cuvier (1769-1832), a primary proponent and founding figure of comparative anatomy, which was the dominant life science in

¹³⁸ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1823, pp. 507-508, 511.

¹³⁹ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1823, p. 508.

¹⁴⁰ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1823, p. 511.

¹⁴¹ Stocking, 1987, pp. 26-27.

Britain of the early nineteenth century. In his major work, *Le Règne animal* of 1817, Cuvier drew on the earlier taxonomical work of Linné, Johann Blumenbach and Comte de Buffon to divide humankind into three distinct races.¹⁴² Based on physical appearance and degree of social development, Cuvier's three races were hierarchically ordered as 'Caucasian or white, the *Mongolian* or yellow and *Ethiopian* or negro', with the European coming out on top as the most beautiful and civilised of all: 'The Caucasian, to which we belong, is distinguished by the beauty of the oval formed by its head, varying in complexion and the colour of the hair. To this variety, the most highly civilised nations, and those which have generally held all others in subjection, are indebted for their origin'.¹⁴³ Making a clear link between physical appearance and degree of civilisation, Cuvier goes on to describe 'The Mongolian' as 'stationary', while reducing the 'Negro race' to the status of animals, arguing that they have never been capable of the true markings of culture such as philosophy, the arts and the sciences:

The Negro race is confined to the south of mount Atlas; it is marked by a black complexion, crisped or woolly hair, compressed cranium, and a flat nose. The projection of the lower parts of the face, and the thick lips, evidently approximate it to the monkey tribe: the hordes of which it consists have always remained in the most complete state of utter barbarism.¹⁴⁴

This use of physical difference to define clear distinctions between Europeans and all others is repeated in phrenology, which, alongside comparative anatomy, became popular in Britain before the mid century. Established by the German physicists Johann G. Spurzheim and Franz J. Gall around 1800, phrenology developed out of physiognomy, an ancient belief in the correlation of facial features or body structure to personal character and temperament that was popularised by Johann K. Lavater in the late eighteenth century. While physiognomy was preoccupied with the face, phrenologists studied the skull with the conviction that the psychological characteristics of a person were determined by the size and relationship of the various organs that contained these 'faculties' in the brain and could be discerned

¹⁴² Bergersen, 1966, pp. 118, 124. Blumenbach divided humankind into five races – Caucasian, Mongolian, Malayan, Ethiopian and American. See Blumenbach, 1950 [1776], pp. 34-35.

¹⁴³ Cuvier, 1950 [1817, 1831], p. 44.

¹⁴⁴ Cuvier, 1950 [1817, 1831], p. 44.

from the shape of the cranium. A large skull with a high forehead was thus presumed to indicate a highly intelligent and moral person. In a small skull with a low brow, by contrast, these human faculties would be overshadowed by ‘animal’ organs, which were seen to be located behind the ear.¹⁴⁵

Although primarily concerned with studying the skulls of Europeans, phrenologists also considered overall distinctions between ‘racial’ groups. Overlapping with Cuvier’s writing on ‘Caucasians’, ‘Mongolians’ and ‘Negros’, advocates of phrenology argued that the large skulls characteristic of Europeans were not only proof of their superiority, but served to justify why the British were fit to rule other peoples, such as ‘Hindoos’.¹⁴⁶ The overall logic – expressed here in an anonymous contribution to *The Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* in 1826 – repeats that championed by Cuvier, explaining how ‘without a considerable size in the brain, a nation can never maintain independence, but, *ceteris paribus*, must inevitably fall to a nation more highly endowed in this respect’.¹⁴⁷

Like comparative anatomy, phrenology essentially followed the developmentalist understanding of human history. This stance is clearly articulated in the work of George Combe (1788-1858), one of the founders of the Edinburgh Phrenological Society and the first editor of *The Phrenological Journal and Miscellany*, which ran between 1823 and 1847. In the introduction to his book *The Constitution of Man*, first published in 1828, Combe writes that the historical progress of Europeans was from a ‘savage’ state, in which they had small brains dominated by animal organs, to a ‘civilised’ condition.¹⁴⁸ Privileging notions of ‘hereditary descent’ over the modifying influences of the environment, Combe argues that progress is made possible through an individual’s cultivation of their intellectual faculties – the result of which would be larger brains in the next generation: ‘the children of the individuals who have obeyed the organic, the moral, and the intellectual laws, will not only start from the highest level of their parents in acquired knowledge, but they

¹⁴⁵ See Parssinen, 1974. Caldwell, 1826-1827, p. 192.

¹⁴⁶ *Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* 1826, p. 224

¹⁴⁷ *Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* 1826, p. 224.

¹⁴⁸ Combe, 1835 (1828), pp. 1-27.

will inherit a tendency towards an enlarged development of the moral and intellectual organs'.¹⁴⁹

A deterministic view upon human development is detectable within Combe's thinking, which seems to separate between the innate capacities of different groups. Although he did allow for development, any social progress that was possible would be extremely slow at best. For Combes it was in fact the case that the 'small' and 'underdeveloped' heads of anyone except Europeans made it more or less impossible for them to become civilised: 'It appears to me that the native American savages, and the native New Hollanders, cannot, with their present brains, adopt European civilization'.¹⁵⁰

Alongside comparative anatomy and phrenology, there was a third science that developed in the first half of the nineteenth century that, more so than any other discipline, became *the* 'science of savages' as it was the only form of scholarship to take non-Western peoples as its specific area of study.¹⁵¹ Associated in Britain with the work of physician James Cowles Prichard (1786-1848), ethnology sought to establish connections between the races of men on the basis of similarities of physical type, religion, political institutions and, most importantly, language. Thus, while comparative anatomists and phrenologists like Cuvier and Combe focused on the differences separating various peoples, Prichard set out to prove human unity, explaining differences in monogenetic terms by looking for evidence of cultural, linguistic and physical linkages.¹⁵² Yet, although ethnology was more explicitly concerned with the study of non-Western peoples it too, like comparative anatomy and phrenology, struggled with the problem of classifying existing 'savages'.

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica*'s 1855 entry on 'ethnology' reveals that there was, still at mid century, ongoing confusion about both the origins of humankind and understandings of diversity. Although a common origin was often supposed, the

¹⁴⁹ Combe, 1835 (1828), pp. 166-167.

¹⁵⁰ Combe, 1835 (1828), p. 167.

¹⁵¹ Stocking, 1987, p. 48.

¹⁵² Stocking, 1987, pp. 50-51.

question of the ‘unity (or non-unity) of mankind’ – that is, whether humankind was comprised of one or several species – was very much an open question. The entry argues, for example, that ‘The Hottentot has a better claim to be considered as a separate species of the genus *Homo* than any other section of our kind’.¹⁵³ Moving on to a description of the ‘American group’, this entry in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* reveals further hesitation concerning the organisation of the world’s populations generally. The confession that the ‘classification of the divisions and sub-divisions’ of this so-called American group was only provisional and had ‘yet to take its final form’ encapsulates the overall uncertainty central to scientific thinking about non-Western peoples in the first half of the nineteenth century.¹⁵⁴

It was only in the decades following the publication of Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* in 1859 that a clear evolutionary framework for explaining human history and diversity would be established. Herein, non-Westerners – particularly those peoples specifically defined as ‘primitive’ by later nineteenth-century anthropologists – increasingly came to be seen, in the language of evolutionism, as the opposite of ‘modern’ society.¹⁵⁵ Western societies were therefore placed at the top of the evolutionary spectrum, where they were defined by the existence of a territorial state, the monogamous family, private property and monotheistic religion. ‘Primitive’ societies, by contrast, were characterised as being nomadic, sexually promiscuous, communal, ordered by kinship and with religions that worshipped ancestor spirits and thus positioned at the starting point of an evolutionary process that would over time lead to contemporary European standards.¹⁵⁶ John Lubbock’s *Origin of Civilisation* of 1870 reflects this view, arguing that marriage had evolved from a communal to individual practice, while religious ideas had progressed from atheism through fetishism, totemism, shamanism, idolatry and, finally, to monotheism.¹⁵⁷ In these contexts, the general thinking was that the living peoples closest to the original condition of humankind were the small, nomadic groups of

¹⁵³ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1855, pp. 353-354.

¹⁵⁴ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1855, p. 347.

¹⁵⁵ Kuper, 1988, pp. 4-7, 231-232.

¹⁵⁶ Kuper, 1988, pp. 4-7, 231-232.

¹⁵⁷ Stocking, 1987, pp. 154-155.

hunter-gatherers living at the peripheries of Western civilisation – Bushmen, Inuit and, in particular, Australian aborigines.¹⁵⁸

In the time period connected to Britain's search for a Northwest Passage between 1818 and 1859, approaches to the visual representation of non-Western peoples were influenced by the new life sciences of the time. However, the impact of these sciences was both mixed and gradual, and nineteenth-century images of non-Western peoples – particularly those produced in the first half of the century – reveal overlaps, ambiguities and syntheses between established and emerging modes of representation. Up until the nineteenth century, representations of non-Western individuals based on empirical observation had not yet come to be conceptualised – as Smith points out, 'the concept of race, as it later came to be understood, was unknown, and the word little used'.¹⁵⁹ The dominant way of thinking was, despite the challenges posed to biblical thought already by the Enlightenment, still aligned with a Christian world-view that, as traced out above, revolved around central notions of universalism, monogenism, dispersal and degeneration. In many ways, the ethnographic convention employed to similar effect by artists ranging from White in the fifteenth century to Webber in the eighteenth was well suited to this world-view, privileging as it did the detailing of adornment and dress as opposed to physique and physiognomy. The driving logic of the ethnographic convention seems to suggest, in other words, that artists were part of a general way of thinking that simply did not expect to discover major differences in physical appearance between peoples. This did not mean, however, that artists were somehow incapable of recording physical variations connected to ethnicity – it is more to say that the act of registering these details was not aligned with theories that explicitly correlated physical difference with the alleged inferiority of non-Western peoples.¹⁶⁰

The charts and diagrams of human heads, faces and skulls produced by comparative anatomists and phrenologists reveal the obsession shared by these disciplines for exact measurement and proportioning systems. Some of the most famous examples

¹⁵⁸ Kuper, 1988, pp. 231-232, 236-237.

¹⁵⁹ Smith, 1992, p. 184

¹⁶⁰ Smith, 1992, p. 184

of this type of imagery were those published by Pieter Camper, a Dutch artist and professor of anatomy whose work – especially his idea of the ‘facial angle’ – influenced comparative anatomy and, perhaps more indirectly, art (**Figs. 1.46-1.48**).¹⁶¹ While it is difficult to trace the impact that the charts and diagrams favoured by phrenologists and comparative anatomists had on artistic production, leading proponents of these sciences such as Cuvier had very clear ideas about the role art should play in the service of science. In his 1800 text, ‘Instructive note on the researches to be made relative to the anatomical differences between diverse races of men’, Cuvier discards existing standards for ethnographic documentation, advocating instead a radical new focus and approach to the visual representation of non-Western peoples. He is critical of the influence of Western artistic traditions and training and, being wholly disinterested in clothing and ornamentation, finds most field drawings of little to no value for contemporary science. Cuvier thus dictates not only what artists should draw when documenting non-Western individuals, he is particular about which views or angles should be taken. Attacking the work of even ‘the greatest painters’ for doing no more than drawing ‘a white man smeared with soot’, Cuvier stresses that artists engaged in documenting ‘the character of the negro’ and other non-Westerners should make use of Camper’s writings:

The drawings which are found in modern voyages, although made on the spot, show the effects more or less of the rules and proportions that the designers learnt in the Schools of Europe, and there is almost none of them on whom the naturalist can sufficiently rely to form the basis of subsequent research. Special studies for the type of portraits which we require are necessary, to the worth of ordinary portraits must be added that of geometric precision which can only be obtained with certain positions of the head, but which must be exact. Thus it is imperative that the straight profile should be joined with the frontal view [...] Drawings of all ages, and different sexes and of diverse conditions in each race must be taken. The clothes, the markings with which the majority of the natives disfigure themselves and which the ordinary travellers are at such pains to send us only serve to disfigure the true character of the face. It would be important that the painter should paint all his heads with the same hair style, the simplest possible, and above all, that which would least cover the forehead and which least changes the shape of the head. All strange ornaments, the rings, the pendants, the tattooing ought to be omitted.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Smith, 1992, p. 186

¹⁶² Cuvier quoted in Smith, 1992, p. 187

While this is a clear departure from the ethnographic convention, Cuvier is similarly interested in arriving at ‘specimens’ or ‘types’ representative of a given ‘race’. He argues for a formulaic approach to representation that would – not unlike the ethnographic convention – use a recurring template to facilitate comparative analysis. Rather than defining ethnicity through material culture, however, it would now be articulated through physical appearance. It is as if the repeat figures appearing in the costume books were to be stripped bare, their differences detailed instead through a close and exacting focus on their previously generalised facial and bodily features.

Although Cuvier’s ideas about ethnographic representation were already in circulation at the start of the century, the new approach to painting he proposed did not replace the longstanding conventions of Western art. Just as nineteenth-century thinking about the history and diversity of humankind was marked by multiple, competing and sometimes opposed points of view, so too were representations of non-Westerner peoples – as is evidenced in some of the material discussed in this thesis – often varied and plural.

With this representational and intellectual background firmly in mind, this thesis now turns to its central task of using analyses of diverse media, forms of display and different artistic approaches to examine the question of whether there existed in Britain a unified view of the Arctic during the high point of its engagement in this region. Although the overview presented above is most relevant to the third and fourth chapters, which deal with representations of Inuit in the genres of exploration imagery and portraiture respectively, the following chapter serves to usefully extend this historical outline. In discussing three high-art paintings variously based on field drawings, second-hand information and imagination, it positions nineteenth-century representations of Arctic peoples in relationship to a consideration of the problems that arose when artists of this time period attempted to produce images of Arctic landscapes. While in many ways rather different, a discussion of Arctic landscape painting – in the realm of high art as opposed to exploration imagery – nonetheless reveals underlying parallels between the experience of documenting unknown

peoples and that of recording unknown places. Together with a consideration of the interplay between art and the ideas emerging from new scientific thinking in the early to mid nineteenth century, issues of artistic training and the influence of established landscape conventions also come into play here, as do questions about the role of proximity to the ‘object’ being represented. In addition, an opening focus on landscape serves to introduce one of the key and persisting stereotypes about the Arctic – as a place that was desolate, uninhabited, permanently frozen and essentially unliveable – against which representations of its peoples were most often produced and understood.

Chapter 2: High Art Landscape Painting

This chapter takes up the central question of whether there was a unified view of the Arctic in the period connected to Britain's search for a Northwest Passage between 1818 and 1859 through analyses of three famous landscape paintings: Caspar David Friedrich's *Das Eismeer* of about 1823, Frederic Edwin Church's *The Icebergs* of 1861 and Edwin Landseer's *Man Proposes – God Disposes* of 1864. Each of these artists, if not also these individual works, are now established in the canon of Western art history, revealing not only a clear intersection between the realm of high art and Arctic exploration within the nineteenth-century, both in Britain and beyond, but suggesting also the importance of the Arctic to cultural production more broadly. Roughly framing the period 1818 to 1859, these three paintings – although primarily representative of the perspectives of the cultural elite – usefully open up a discussion of what has arguably been the most persistent stereotype of the Arctic. Each of these works appears to similarly show the Arctic as a frozen, uninhabited and barren landscape, a place of danger, death and destruction. In addition, all three paintings seem to be works of the imagination – images produced, in other words, by 'armchair artists' working in the comfort of their ateliers at the urban centres of Europe and North America. Closer inspection reveals however that the similarities shared by Friedrich's, Church's and Landseer's well-known paintings of the Arctic are mainly superficial. Emerging out of distinct historical, cultural, political and artistic circumstances – including, importantly, the artists' relationships to the Arctic – the ice-covered, uninhabited and hostile landscapes of *Das Eismeer*, *The Icebergs* and *Man Proposes – God Disposes* both embodied and conveyed a range of different

and sometimes contradictory ideas that did not necessarily comply with the stereotypes they seem, from our point of view today, to support.

The chapter is divided into three case studies that focus on Friedrich's, Church's and Landseer's works respectively. Each case study begins with a description of the painting under discussion, including the context of the painting's making and original display. A review of existing art historical literature follows, setting up a close visual analysis wherein the critical reception of each work at the time of its original display acts as a reference point from which to investigate its relationship to contemporary discourse on the Arctic. Focusing on the various social, aesthetic and political contexts in which the paintings emerged, each case study adopts different historic and aesthetic perspectives to draw attention to the distinctiveness of the works regarding their intention, interpretation and terms of production. A common theme throughout is the interactions between representation, scientific thought and popular culture.

Using an in-depth literature review to identify a key problem in existing art historical scholarship on Friedrich's *Das Eismeer* – namely, a lack of thorough consideration for its obviously Arctic thematic – the first case study examines the painting's relationship to Britain's early nineteenth-century exploration of the Arctic and popular perceptions of these expeditions circulating in Europe more broadly at the time. Referring to the painting's critical reception in art journals published in the German Confederation, the case study then turns to Jay Appleton's 'habitat theory' and comparisons with other images of icebound vessels in the Arctic in an attempt to partly explain why Friedrich's work – which was based on the artist's imagination and, perhaps, contemporary Arctic exploration imagery circulating in popular culture – may have been met with mainly negative reviews. In breaking with current landscape conventions, Friedrich appears not only to have challenged the dominant aesthetic of his time; like satirical images of explorers produced by Friedrich's contemporaries in Britain, his 'un-aesthetic' image of the Arctic seems to have expressed a negativity toward Arctic exploration that was similarly out of step with the period's generally optimistic view on British endeavour in this region.

The second case study employs a focused critique of established art historical scholarship on Church's *The Icebergs*, pointing to a central gap in this literature – the tendency to overlook the British aspect of Church's painting and its intersection with mid nineteenth-century perceptions of the Arctic in favour of its possible (American) religious and political content. Filling this gap, the case study attempts to situate *The Icebergs* in the social, aesthetic and scientific contexts in which it emerged, placing specific emphasis on the reception of the work when it was displayed – not unlike a panorama – as a one-man, one-work exhibition in London. Bringing into the analysis visual and textual descriptions of Arctic landscapes produced by American and British explorers that were roughly Church's contemporaries, as well as the writings of Alexander von Humboldt and current geological debates, the case study takes up issues of colour, authenticity, aesthetics and science. Unique in its origins in Church's own field drawings of icebergs from an expedition to Labrador and Newfoundland, *The Icebergs* was nonetheless experienced by many of its viewers as an otherworldly and mystical landscape, suggesting links to fantastical texts about icebergs and the poles, as well as Victorian fairy paintings. Tracing out this strange confluence of ideas and associations, the case study uncovers multiple and diverging readings of Church's painting at mid century, making for an awkward fit between *The Icebergs* and perceptions about the Arctic at the time.

Identifying Landseer's motive and inspiration for painting *Man Proposes – God Disposes*, the third case study addresses the broad range of visual and material culture linked to the Franklin expedition that Landseer may have looked to – panoramas, expedition accounts and newspaper articles related to the searches, as well as the display of relics recovered in the Arctic and brought back to Britain – in conceiving and producing this work. Using the polarised reception of *Man Proposes – God Disposes* when it was first displayed at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1864, the case study places Landseer's painting in the specific context of the Franklin tragedy. Of importance to the discussion are John Rae's 1854 report on the fate of Franklin and the divided opinions his finds, especially his claim of cannibalism among the crew, generated. The case study looks in particular at the

ways in which Charles Dickens contested Rae's report, using journal articles and a play to overwrite Rae's conclusions with ideals of British male identity. Parallel notions about honour and stoicism seem to circulate in reviews of the Royal Academy exhibition, which promote an aesthetic of restraint and unsentimentality in defence of Landseer's work. Combining this together with a consideration of the relationship between *Man Proposes – God Disposes* and an 'Oriental' scene it was displayed alongside at the Royal Academy, the case study finds that Landseer – who never travelled to the Arctic – contributed to and helped consolidate negative stereotypes about the region that had become increasingly prevalent throughout British society following Franklin's disappearance about fifteen years earlier.

Before proceeding, it is important to keep in mind that the conclusions reached in this chapter are of course linked to the somewhat narrow social dimension – namely, who viewed and reviewed art – that informed and produced the original reception of Friedrich's, Church's and Landseer's paintings. It should be stressed, in other words, that the opinions expressed in the reviews included in the following three case studies did not necessarily represent perspectives that were read or shared by society more broadly.¹

This was certainly the case in Britain, where the audiences who visited and were welcome at art galleries were primarily of the middle and upper classes.² Although it is the case that some poor people would have been able to read the reviews that featured in various penny-weeklies, the entrance fee of one shilling – or twenty times the price of a penny-weekly – it cost to view Church's or Landseer's paintings would have been far too high for most.³ Thus, while reviews of *The Icebergs* and *Man*

¹ While the readership of the reviews of *Das Eismeer* published in specialised journals – and, by extension the audience that would have viewed Friedrich's painting – is not established here, it is most likely the case that, as in Britain, it consisted mainly of the educated and economically well-to-do classes. Linked as it is to the social history of the German Confederation, this material belongs to a specialist subject area that falls outside the scope of this thesis.

² Solkin, 2001, p. 6.

³ Advertisements in *Standard* 22 June 1863, front page; *Reader* 7 May 1864, front page. In the 1850s and 1860s, 'working people' bought Sunday papers at the cost of a penny or two a week. However, they could not afford to spend a penny on daily

Proposes – God Disposes were published in ‘radical’ lower middle and working class Sunday papers such as *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* and *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, the majority circulated in newspapers, magazines and periodicals aimed at the more affluent sections of society: for example, *The Athenaeum*, *Saturday Review*, *Illustrated London News*, *Fraser’s Magazine* and *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* amongst others.⁴ The notions articulated by a social elite may at times be representative of broader sentiments in society, yet such perspectives should not be allowed to stand in for, or overwrite, culture at large.

Caspar David Friedrich’s *Das Eismeer*, 1823-24

Exhibited for the first time only six years after Ross and Buchan had re-opened Britain’s historical quest for a Northwest Passage, Caspar David Friedrich’s (1774-1840) *Das Eismeer* – completed at the end of 1823 or early 1824 – shows an imaginary scene of the Arctic Sea (**Fig. 2.1**). The most striking feature of *Das Eismeer* is arguably the vast sheets of ice positioned at the centre of an immense frozen seascape. Its colour creates a feeling of cold while the small islands in the background give the impression that the viewer is overlooking a flat territory of seemingly endless proportion. The scene is intimidating – perhaps because there are no human figures in view – a feeling that is enforced when noticing at second glance the stern and sail of a ship, which has almost disappeared completely into the ice. As in the surrounding landscape there are no human figures or signs of life onboard this vessel, leaving the viewer without anyone with whom to identify. The immediate reaction to the scene is thus decidedly negative, with the sinking ship suggesting that

newspapers. According to Lucy Brown, a penny was actually ‘a substantial sum to spend on something of casual interest’, and it is unlikely that people in the working and, even, lower middle classes would have spent twenty pence on an art exhibition. See Brown, 1985, pp. 30-31.

⁴ Additionally, *The Annual Register*, *The Art Journal*, *The Daily News*, *The Morning Chronicle*, *The Examiner*, *The Fine Arts Quarterly Review*, *The Reader*, *The Spectator*, *The Standard* and *The Times*. See Altick, 1957, pp. 6, 342, 344-345, 348-349, 354, 356, 358; Brown, 1985, pp. 18-19, 30; Houghton, 1966, pp. 7-8, 304. Solkin, 2001, p. 6. North, 2003a; North, 2003b; North, 2003d; North, 2003c; North, 2003f; North, 2003g; North, 2003h; North, 2003e.

everyone onboard is already dead and that the monumental sheets of ice will eventually descend back into the water erasing all traces of the violence and tragedy being pictured.

Friedrich never visited the Arctic. The ice in *Das Eismeer* is based on 1820/21 studies of ice on the river Elbe (**Fig. 2.2**). In *Das Eismeer*, these pieces of river ice have been transformed into sheets of sea ice of enormous dimensions. Opaquely painted in grey and brown colours they are rendered as clearly defined, flat shards of jaggedly geometric ice. Similar to the sketches, the surface in the foreground is brown. As a result, the ice in *Das Eismeer* looks more like slabs of stone, such as shale or slate, than frozen water, and the surface in the foreground suggests land instead of sea. The triangular composition and the jagged outline of the ice are also similar to *Felsenriff am Meeresstrand*, which Friedrich painted about a year later (**Fig. 2.3**).

Das Eismeer's association with land suggests a fusion of what originally was viewed as two distinct genres, landscape and seascape. On the one hand, what is represented is a marine scene of sea, although frozen, and a shipwreck where the form and colour of the icebergs in the background bring forth associations of other ships. On the other hand, the scene seems to work better visually as a landscape. There are no waves or movement in the sea, and instead of water, the surface looks solid as if it would be possible to walk upon it. In addition to his overlap of sea and landscape, Friedrich broke with classical traditions of landscape painting by creating a view without a foreground. Like a zoomed-in photograph, the central structure of ice is brought forward and we are able to see details of the ship, such as the rigging and fence on the stern. If the slabs of ice in the lowest part of the canvas did comprise a foreground, the perceived distance between these and the tower of ice does not seem big enough in relation to the size of the ship. The untraditional composition may explain why Carl Töpfer, an art critic who reviewed the exhibition at Hamburger

Kunstverein in 1826, commented that *Das Eismeer* looked more like a miniature model in river ice than a real ship in the Arctic Sea.⁵

Friedrich exhibited *Das Eismeer* four times between 1824 and 1826. Presented as ‘an ideal scene of an Arctic sea, a wrecked ship under masses of ice’, *Das Eismeer* was first shown at the Academy Exhibition in Prague in early 1824.⁶ In August the same year, Friedrich displayed *Das Eismeer* at the Academy Exhibition in Dresden and, in 1826, in Hamburg and Berlin.⁷ Despite these public showings, Friedrich was – perhaps because of its unusual composition and motif – unable to sell his painting.⁸ It seems that *Das Eismeer* may have been too radical for potential buyers, with Friedrich’s friend and colleague the Norwegian landscape painter Johann Christian Dahl – who went on to acquire *Das Eismeer* after Friedrich’s death – commenting that Friedrich was ‘misinterpreted by most people’ and that his paintings were typically seen ‘as no more than curiosities’.⁹ Dahl’s comments may additionally explain why most art historical interpretations in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries have concerned themselves primarily with the painting’s allegorical or symbolical meaning without exploring what Friedrich’s representation of the Arctic meant to the contemporary German public.

***Das Eismeer* as Religious Allegory and Political Critique**

Although many previous art historians to have written on *Das Eismeer* mention that Britain’s exploration of the Arctic was what inspired the painting, they believe Friedrich’s work represented metaphysical ideas that were beyond comprehension to

⁵ In Töpfer’s 1826 review titled ‘Erste Kunstaussstellung in Hamburg’ in *Originalien aus dem Gebiete der Wahrheit, Kunst, Laune und Phantasie* republished in Börsch-Supan and Jähnig, 1973, p. 107.

⁶ Börsch-Supan and Jähnig, 1973, pp. 102, 103.

⁷ Börsch-Supan and Jähnig, 1973, pp. 107, 110.

⁸ Börsch-Supan, 1974, p. 140.

⁹ Dahl quoted in Vaughan, et al., 1972, p. 108. Dahl was a Norwegian landscape painter contemporary of Friedrich.

his contemporaries.¹⁰ Werner Hofmann, for example, argues that the possibility of reading Friedrich's painting as either 'pseudo-reportage' on exploration or a 'comment on the dangers of human enterprises' has not been valid since Wolfgang Stechow discovered in 1965 that *Das Eismeer* was not, as previously thought, another painting titled *Gescheiterte Hoffnung (Wreck of the Hope)* – now lost.¹¹ Without a reference to an actual event, scholars working in Stechow's wake have commonly avoided direct interpretations of Friedrich's overtly Arctic motif by arguing that the scene was completely fictional.¹² Instead of investigating its potential Arctic contexts, *Das Eismeer* has invariably been interpreted instead in terms of art historical periodisation, artist biography and metaphor – a self-portrait of the 'failed' melancholic artist or an expression of the Kantian split between self and world, for example.¹³ Championed by Helmut Börsch-Supan and Jens Christian Jensen respectively, the most common understandings of *Das Eismeer* today are as religious allegory or political critique.¹⁴

In his major 1974 publication on Friedrich's oeuvre, Börsch-Supan argues that by painting landscapes he had never seen Friedrich attempted to approach the transcendental. For Börsch-Supan *Das Eismeer* symbolises human inapproachability to God: the wrecked ship signifies man, who is unable to reach the Divine by rational means, while the 'eternal' ice, shaped like a temple, is God. Börsch-Supan compares the shards of ice in the foreground to steps, for example, 'which the imagination must climb' in order to reach the sunlight visible through a break in the layer of

¹⁰ Börsch-Supan, 1974, p. 140; Wolf, 2003, p. 73.

¹¹ HK 1051 Stechow, 1965.

¹² Hofmann, 2000, p. 220.

¹³ HK 1051 Janson, 1991; HK 1051 Neidhardt, 1974; Koerner, 1990, pp. 28, 74, 76, 100.

¹⁴ Hofmann, 2000, p. 220. In addition to Börsch-Supan, clear advocates of a religious interpretation of *Das Eismeer* include R. Rosenblum, Gisela Hopp, Herbert von Eiheim and Sabine Mertens. The painting has been read as political critique by: Jensen, Werner Hofmann, Hans Joachim Neidhardt, H.C. Oeser, Norbert Wolf, Mai Ekkehard, Willi Paul Adams and Thomas W. Gaehtgens, Christiane Stuckenbrock and Barbara Töpper. See HK 1051 Rosenblum, 1975; HK 1051 Hopp, 1978; HK 1051 von Eiheim, 1978; HK 1051 Mertens, 1987; HK 1051 Neidhardt, 1974; HK 1051 Oeser, 1984; HK 1051 Gaehtgens and Adams, 1988; HK 1051 Wolf, 1999; HK 1051 Ekkehard, 2001; Hofmann, 2000, pp. 220-236.

clouds directly above the central ice formation.¹⁵ Although Börsch-Supan has since been criticised for ‘reading into’ Friedrich’s works, most art historians have nonetheless continued in his footsteps by interpreting *Das Eismeer* as representing metaphysical ideas.¹⁶ The painting is often analysed as an allegory of death and transience, a signifier of man’s temporality and hopelessness in the face of all-powerful nature.¹⁷ In this connection, Friedrich’s work is often compared to Théodore Géricault’s *Raft of the Medusa* – painted about four years earlier – with the diagonal line formed by Friedrich’s tower of ice likened to the diagonal line made up of forlorn people in Géricault’s composition (**Fig. 2.4**).¹⁸ As with the people on Géricault’s raft, art historians have similarly seen the heavenwards-striving movement of the tower of ice in *Das Eismeer* as signifying ‘hope’ – in this case, a deliverance from earthly purgatory or a transition to heaven.¹⁹

A religious allegorical interpretation of Friedrich’s *Das Eismeer* is supported by the fact that one important feature of Friedrich’s personality was his Christian dedication. Friedrich was brought up in a Protestant Christian home and later in life he was inspired by his contemporary, the theologian Schleiermacher, to express his faith through art and ‘reassert the importance of religious experience in the modern world’.²⁰ Although religious symbols are altogether lacking in *Das Eismeer*, a potential Christian message may be deduced by adopting a common art historical approach to Friedrich’s oeuvre in general. Arguing that it is essential to know Friedrich in order to understand his work, Börsch-Supan and Joseph Leo Koerner emphasise the personal dimension of his production – described by Koerner, for example, as ‘perhaps the most consciously subjective works of art before our

¹⁵ Börsch-Supan, 1974, p. 140.

¹⁶ About ten years after Börsch-Supan’s publication of 1974, Rosen and Zerner launched their critique of his interpretation of the artist’s works. They argued for example that in Börsch-Supan’s systematic decoding of Friedrich’s works, ‘every distant view represents paradise; every blade of grass, the transience of life; every birch tree, resurrection; every river, death’. See Rosen and Zerner, 1984, p. 56.

¹⁷ Monrad and Bailey, 1999, p. 63. HK 1051 Calvocoressi, 1978; HK 1051 Cardinal, 1975; HK 1051 Mertens, 1987; HK 1051 Rosenblum, 1975.

¹⁸ HK 1051 Calvocoressi, 1978; HK 1051 Mertens, 1987.

¹⁹ HK 1051 Mertens, 1987.

²⁰ Vaughan, 2004, pp. 73-74. Koerner, 1990, p. 16.

century'.²¹ Referring to paintings like *Trees and Bushes in the Snow*, Koerner points out that Friedrich's art was *Erlebniskunst* (art based on experience) – that is, expressions of the artist's personal experience of his surroundings (**Fig. 2.5**). In analysing Friedrich's close-up study of a thicket against a background of fog, Koerner claims that we 'enter into the very fabric of the artist's gaze, ourselves experiencing through particularized nature the radical *Eigentümlichkeit*', meaning the peculiarity and unconventionality, of Friedrich.²² Based among other things on Friedrich's statement that 'The painter should not merely paint what he sees in front of him, but also what he sees within himself', Koerner subsequently understands Friedrich's works not as landscapes but as self-portraits, with *Das Eismeer* coming to potentially express Friedrich's experience of religion.²³

Alongside the religious allegorical understanding of *Das Eismeer* advocated by Börsch-Supan, Jensen has promoted a political interpretation of Friedrich's work, noting that another key trait of Friedrich's personality was, in addition to his Christian faith, his dissatisfaction with the political situation of his time. In 1813, the French occupation of German territories ceased. To the disappointment of many, liberation did not bring social and political improvement, however, but a continued suppression of civil rights. The German Confederation – the name of the restoration government created in 1815 – comprised a conglomerate of individual states with different rulers that, founded on principles of dynastic legitimacy and territorial sovereignty, were unwilling to surrender their power and privileges to democracy.²⁴ Fighting for a united Germany and a common constitution, liberal-democratic and nationalist movements such as the student organisation *Burschenschaften* challenged the political system. To combat this social unrest, authorities of the different states co-operated, with a conference in Carlsbad in 1819, resulting in a set of social restrictions that came into force throughout the German Confederation. Introduced by Klemens Wenzel von Metternich, the prince of Austria, the Carlsbad Decrees

²¹ Börsch-Supan, 1974, p. 8. Koerner, 1990, p. 76.

²² Koerner, 1990, p. 74.

²³ Friedrich quoted in Koerner, 1990, p. 74. Koerner, 1990, pp. 16, 76.

²⁴ 'The German Confederation' consisted of present-day Germany, Austria, Czech and other central European countries. See Nipperdey, 1996 (1983), pp. 313-314.

called for a tightening of press censorship, close surveillance of the universities, a ban on all student organisations and the creation of a secret police. Enforced in 1824, the decrees essentially turned the German Confederation into a police state.²⁵

Personal letters to friends and family bear witness to Friedrich's response to this political situation. He corresponded for example with university professor Ernst Moritz Arndt – a German nationalist who was imprisoned after the Carlsbad Decrees came into force.²⁶ In a letter dated 1814, Friedrich wrote to Arndt about the lack of governmental initiative to raise a monument for the men who had died fighting in the war of liberation. Presenting a strong critique of the current political situation, Friedrich expressed clearly anti-nobility and pro-democratic leanings: 'As long as we remain servants to the princes, nothing great will happen. Where the people do not have a voice, the nation is also not allowed to be aware of itself and to feel honour'.²⁷

Like the advocates of a religious reading of *Das Eismeer*, art historians in favour of a political interpretation understand Friedrich's painting as an allegorical representation. Jensen, for example, explains *Das Eismeer* as showing the 'frozen' situation in Germany, which for him is signified by the icescape, burying the 'Freiheitsgedanken' or 'freedom thought', contrastingly symbolised by the ship.²⁸ Describing *Das Eismeer* as a symbol of the 'paralyzed condition of Germany', Hofmann similarly suggests that Friedrich included a hidden appeal of revolt to his contemporaries, with the angular ice in the centre proclaiming 'escape from the grip in which they are held'.²⁹ The comparison with Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa* is repeated in Hofmann's and other political interpretations of *Das Eismeer*.³⁰ Basing

²⁵ Nipperdey, 1996 (1983), pp. 247-249.

²⁶ Vaughan, 2004, p. 184.

²⁷ 'Solange wir Fürstenknechte bleiben, wird auch nie etwas Großes der Art geschehen. Wo das Volk keine Stimme hat, wird dem Volk auch nicht erlaubt, sich zu fühlen und zu ehren', Friedrich quoted in Grave, 2001, p. 28. Translation by Charlotte von Carmer. See also Vaughan, 2004, p. 150

²⁸ 'allgemeine erstarrung in Deutschland (...) die das Schiff, den Freiheitsgedanken, unter sich begräbt'. HK 1051 Jensen, 1974. Translation by Charlotte von Carmer

²⁹ Hofmann, 2000, pp. 99, 220.

³⁰ See for example Jensen, 1981, p. 180; Hofmann, 2000, p. 236; HK 1051 Calvocoressi, 1978.

his painting on the recent tragedy of the shipwreck of the French naval frigate *Méduse* in 1816, Géricault mounted a critique of the inept right-wing government in France, and some scholars argue that Friedrich did much the same when painting *Das Eismeer*.³¹ Art historians such as Hofmann believe that the formal affinities of the two paintings express similar meanings. For him ‘Géricault was also depicting the absence of a hand on the political helm of his country, just as Friedrich’s angular blocks represent both anti-democratic hardening and the secret hope that the ice would one day break’.³²

The political reading of *Das Eismeer* proposed by art historians like Hofmann, Jensen and others can, however, be substantiated by the context of its original display. In three exhibitions – in Dresden, Hamburg and Berlin – Friedrich displayed *Das Eismeer* alongside a work titled *Huttens Grab*, according to William Vaughan ‘one of the clearest [political] statements Friedrich ever made’ (**Fig. 2.6**).³³ The painting commemorates both the 300th anniversary of the Hutten-inspired German Knights Revolt against the Roman Church and the tenth anniversary of liberation from the French.³⁴ Set inside the ruins of a gothic chapel, *Huttens Grab* shows a man in profile contemplating a sarcophagus. The base and side of the grave are inscribed with the names of men who either died during the war of liberation or opposed the restoration government.³⁵ In addition to this, Friedrich painted the figure appearing

³¹ Vaughan, 2004, p. 226.

³² Hofmann, 2000, p. 236.

³³ Börsch-Supan and Jähnig, 1973, pp. 103, 107, 110, 387, 389. Vaughan, 2004, p. 182.

³⁴ Koerner, 1990, p. 243.

³⁵ The inscriptions read ‘Hutten’, ‘Jahn 1813’, ‘Arndt 1813’, ‘Stein 1813’, ‘Görres 1821’ and ‘Scharnhorst’. Scharnhorst was a Prussian general who died from wounds he received in the Battle of Lützen against Napoleon in 1813. With ‘Stein’, Friedrich is possibly referring to Heinrich Friedrich Karl Reichsfreiherr vom und zum Stein, a German statesman who wanted a united Germany and remained critical to the federal arrangement of the German Confederation. Görres and Arndt fell victim to the post-war prosecution of ‘demagogues’. Johann Joseph von Görres was a political activist in Prussia who criticised the Carlsbad Decrees through pamphlet writings. In 1821 he avoided prison by running away to Switzerland. Ernst Moritz Arndt was a liberal university professor and supporter of the *Burschenschaften*. Following the decrees, Arndt was arrested and had his teacher’s license withdrawn. Vaughan, 2004, pp. 150, 184, 336. Börsch-Supan and Jähnig, 1973, p. 389.

in *Huttens Grab* in *altdeutsch* costume – a dress designed by Arndt (named on the grave) during the French occupation that was made illegal by 1821 following the Carlsbad Decrees. Inspired by the Medieval Ages and used as a symbol of democracy, *altdeutsch* dress became fashionable, especially among students involved in the *Burschenschaft* movement that defied first the French occupation and later the restoration government.³⁶ There was, in other words, little doubt about the political subtext of *Huttens Grab*.

It seems that Friedrich's biography and oeuvre can thus be used to support a political reading of *Das Eismeer*. In a more subtle approach to the explicit political critique contained in *Huttens Grab*, it could be that *Das Eismeer* turns to an imaginary Arctic to present a more obscure commentary on the political situation in Germany at the time. In this sense, *Das Eismeer* might be understood as a veiled call to action, a 'protest' or 'hidden political message' with 'pointed, angular blocks' becoming 'an aggressive signal that marked not defeat but resistance'.³⁷

Problems of Existing Interpretations

While the earlier religious and political interpretations of *Das Eismeer* circulating in previous art historical writings do consider important aspects of Friedrich's time period and draw attention to his personal convictions, there are problems with these readings when the painting is treated separately from any biographical information. Considering the scene that is actually represented, one problem is the way in which art historians, particularly those promoting religious interpretations of Friedrich's work, align *Das Eismeer* with the 'hope' expressed in Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa*.³⁸

³⁶ Howoldt, 2007; Vaughan, 2004, p. 185.

³⁷ Hofmann, 2000, p. 236.

³⁸ Although Friedrich may have come across a small lithograph of *The Raft of the Medusa* that circulated in Germany, Géricault's painting was never exhibited here. It is thus likely that Friedrich never saw Géricault's work.

In Géricault's composition the main diagonal movement ascends from left to right and, although there are dead people at the bottom of this line, hope is clearly present at its top – as signified by the ship in the distance. In *Das Eismeer* the main diagonal moves in the opposite direction and seems to communicate a very different meaning. Here, there is a descent from left to right, with deadly shards of ice positioned above the disappearing ship. The ship in *Das Eismeer* is, in other words, placed in an inverse position to that of the ship – and by extension the promise of hope – in *The Raft of the Medusa*. The diagonal lines used by both artists seem to be mirror images of one another, two contrasting lines conveying contrasting notions: progress and hope versus downfall and regression.

Another problem with previous art historical interpretations of *Das Eismeer* is that this painting – unlike many of Friedrich's other works – does not contain any actual religious or political symbols. In addition to the politically suggestive imagery found in *Huttens Grab*, Friedrich's oeuvre includes a number of works containing obvious religious symbolism, with crosses, crucifixes and churches featured in paintings such as *The Cross in the Forest*, *Vision of the Christian Church* and *The Cathedral*. Another painting, *The Cross in the Mountains (The Tetschen Altar)*, shows a crucifix on a hilltop surrounded by fir trees, with its golden frame – also designed by Friedrich – incorporating putti and other religious symbols such as vines, straws of corn and an icon representing the Trinity (**Fig. 2.7**).

In its overriding focus on the metaphorical, most previous scholarship on *Das Eismeer* has thus overlooked or taken for granted the painting's Arctic subject matter. In doing so, earlier writings on Friedrich have largely failed to consider the ways in which *Das Eismeer* intersected with ideas about the Arctic at the time or, by extension, to address what the painting may have meant to its early nineteenth-century audiences. Given that Dahl, who was well acquainted with Friedrich and his work, argued that Friedrich was true to nature in everything he painted, it seems necessary to investigate further why he came to exhibit a landscape he had never seen.³⁹

³⁹ Vaughan, et al., 1972, p. 108.

Writing within the field of Arctic studies, one of the only authors to consider the Arctic context of Friedrich's work is Potter, who in addition to giving a rich visual description of *Das Eismeer*, provides a comprehensive account of the painting's likely sources of inspiration.⁴⁰ Yet, while his brief treatment of *Das Eismeer* rightly connects Friedrich's painting to the early British expeditions of the nineteenth century, Potter's coverage of its original display is incomplete and he does not take the time to question why Friedrich painted an imaginary Arctic landscape.⁴¹ Despite the fact that *Das Eismeer* did not sell in 1824 or 1826, Potter jumps to the conclusion that Friedrich's painting was 'exhibited in both Prague and Dresden to tremendous acclaim'. In doing so, he notably disregards the reviews of Friedrich's work – which were at times rather negative – and thus fails to recognise that the painting did not correspond to popular ideas about the Arctic and Arctic exploration at the time.⁴²

Das Eismeer in Review

Friedrich never travelled further north than Copenhagen, so his knowledge of the Arctic Sea or sea ice was restricted to secondary sources. Reviews of *Das Eismeer* show that Friedrich's contemporaries were clearly keeping up with Britain's exploration of the Arctic. An anonymous critic writing for *Literarisches Conversations-Blatt* in 1824, for example, made direct reference to Britain's new phase of Arctic exploration in the nineteenth century, advising exhibition goers not to 'overlook the other work by the genius Friedrich, the Arctic Sea, just like we know it from the brave Parry's accounts; it is beautiful in its gaping and hostile grandness'.⁴³ The public's awareness of Parry's, Ross's, Buchan's and Franklin's

⁴⁰ Potter, 2007, pp. 57-59.

⁴¹ Potter is aware that *Das Eismeer* was exhibited in both Prague and Dresden in 1824, but makes no mention of its subsequent display in Hamburg and Berlin in 1826.

⁴² Potter, 2007, p. 58.

⁴³ 'Uebersieh auch das andere Werk des genialen Friedrich nicht, das Eismeer, ganz so wie wir es aus den wackern Parry's Schilderungen kennen; es ist schön in seiner

early exploits is further noted in periodicals like *Artistisches Notizenblatt*. Writing in 1825, an art critic named Böttiger certainly seems to have been keeping up to date with British exploration when he suggested to his readers that *Das Eismeer* showed *HMS Griper*, one of the ships used during Parry's First Voyage.⁴⁴

Like these critics, Friedrich was probably aware of Britain's early nineteenth-century involvement in the Arctic. He would have been able to acquire German translations of Ross's and Parry's travel accounts – published in 1820, 1821 and 1824 – and read reviews and excerpts of their voyages printed in the press.⁴⁵ Additionally, Antonio Sacchetti exhibited a half-circle panorama entitled the *North Pole Expedition* in Prague in 1820 and, in 1821, Johann Carl Enslen's miniature panorama *Winter Sojourn of the North Pole Expedition* was also on display in Dresden.⁴⁶ Although Russia was active in the Arctic in this time period, it seems most likely that Sacchetti's and Enslen's panoramas were – as Potter assumes – connected to Britain's search for a Northwest Passage.⁴⁷ The titles of Sacchetti's and Enslen's exhibitions closely resemble the type of language used in advertisements for panoramas that were on show in Britain at the time, which featured views from Franklin's and Buchan's expedition and invariably used the words 'Polar' and 'North

starren feindlichen Größe', *Literarisches Conversations-Blatt* 1824, quoted in Börsch-Supan and Jähnig, 1973, p. 104.

⁴⁴ Böttiger, *Artistisches Notizenblatt* 1825, quoted in Börsch-Supan and Jähnig, 1973, p. 106.

⁴⁵ Ross, 1820; Parry, 1821b; Parry, 1824b. HK 1051 Stubbe, 17 September 1963; Potter, 2007, pp. 57-58.

⁴⁶ Sacchetti's and Enslen's panoramas were smaller in size than the 360° panorama-paintings mounted in buildings specifically designed for these types of displays. According to Potter, Sacchetti's and Enslen's works were also called 'cosmoramas' and 'hemicycloramas'. Unlike the circle-panoramas, which were created and fixed in-house, Enslen's and Sacchetti's creations were portable. According to Stephan Oettermann, cosmoramas were semi-circles with about one-metre high watercolour representations enclosed in a case. Magnifying lenses were mounted to the front of the case. The magnifying lens enlarged the image about three times. Additionally, it added a sense of plasticity and greater distance between painting and viewer. Potter, 2007, p. 229; Oettermann, 1997, p. 69.

⁴⁷ Potter, 2007, p. 57. In 1816 Otto von Kotzebue, sent to search for the Northwest Passage, found and claimed Kotzebue Sound, on the American shore of Bering Strait and in 1820 the Russian Admiralty sent two expeditions to survey the north-eastern coast of Siberia. See Hayes, 2003, pp. 59, 112.

Pole' in their descriptions.⁴⁸ In any case, there is a good chance that Friedrich could have visited Sacchetti's and Enseln's exhibitions as, according to both Stephan Oettermann and Bernard Comment, he was highly impressed by panoramas in general and had even entertained plans of painting one himself.⁴⁹

While reviewers of *Das Eismeer* linked Friedrich's painting to contemporary events in the Arctic, they had problems when attempting to interpret it and make aesthetic evaluations. Reception of *Das Eismeer* in 1824 and 1826 is characterised by diversity and confusion. In addition to its unconventional motif, Friedrich's painting blurred distinctions between two categories – landscape and seascape – that were traditionally to be kept separate. This may have upset art critics, particularly more conservative ones, resulting in negative responses to Friedrich's work. On a more fundamental level *Das Eismeer* seems to go against what the viewer naturally associates with the pleasant. Although there were some positive reviews –the *Merkur* admired *Das Eismeer* as a 'deep study of nature' for example, and *Kunstblatt* described it as an 'organ of poetry' – there was clearly something about Friedrich's painting that generally upset its viewers, and it is perhaps unsurprising in these circumstances that his work did not sell.⁵⁰

In the bulk of the reviews from the first exhibitions of *Das Eismeer* in Prague and Dresden in 1824, critics commonly questioned Friedrich's use of perspective, colour and choice of motif. *Archiv für Geschichte* for example essentially dismissed *Das Eismeer* as merely a 'study'. Claiming that the perspective was off and that the ice was not transparent enough, the author behind this particular review was in addition disturbed by the fact that it was impossible to make sense of 'the foam-like white' appearing in between the slabs of ice. There was a further regret expressed concerning the fact that Friedrich had made the ice rather than the ship the focus of

⁴⁸ *Morning Chronicle* 19 May 1819; *Morning Chronicle* 24 February 1819; *Bristol Mercury* 23 June 1823.

⁴⁹ Oettermann, 1997, pp. 46-47; Comment, 1999, pp. 86, 100.

⁵⁰ In two anonymous reviews of 1824 titled 'Ueber die Kunstausstellung zu Prag' and 'Die Kunstausstellung zu Prag im Jahre 1824' respectively, both republished in Börsch-Supan and Jähnig, 1973, p. 103.

his composition.⁵¹ Writing in a similar vein, an anonymous critic for *Literarisches Conversations-Blatt* criticised Friedrich for making no meaningful advancement in an allegedly hollow search for newness, complaining that his representation of a shipwreck wedged between gaping ice floes was not aesthetic.⁵² Another review in the same journal went on to express the opinion that the subject matter of *Das Eismeer* was ill suited to painting, asking ‘What should a couple of ice clumps conjure up in the soul?’⁵³

The negative reviews of 1824 more or less continued when Friedrich’s painting was exhibited in Berlin and Hamburg two years later. A critic writing for *Blätter für Literarische Unterhaltung* in 1826 expressed the hope that the giant ‘Eisgerülle’, or ice boulder, of the North Pole would melt.⁵⁴ Töpfer likewise disapproved of Friedrich’s Arctic seascape, attacking the realism of *Das Eismeer* by pointing to the fact that the ice was not, in his opinion, transparent enough, while a review in *Der Gesellschafter* thought that Friedrich should ‘paint subjects closer to us’.⁵⁵

⁵¹ In an anonymous 1824 review (über die Prager Ausstellung von 1824) republished in Börsch-Supan and Jähnig, 1973, p. 103.

⁵² ‘Die Kunst schien in dem verflossenen Jahre keine bedeutenden Fortschritte gemacht zu haben, wenn einer der gefeiertsten Meister sich in krankhaftem Streben nach Neuheit und Seltsamkeit bis zu den starren Eisschollen des Nordmeers verstieg; von denen die eingekeilten Schiffstrümmer das nach Schönheit und Leben suchende Auge zurückscheuchten’. In an anonymous 1824 review titled ‘Die Berliner Kunstaussstellung’ republished in Börsch-Supan and Jähnig, 1973, p. 104.

⁵³ ‘Ich bekenne, daß ich solche Gegenstände außer dem Gebiet der Malerie erachte, was in der That sollen die Farben, was die Seele in einige Eisklumpen hineinzaubern?’. In an anonymous 1824 review titled ‘Ueber die Kunstaussstellung in Dresden’ republished in Börsch-Supan and Jähnig, 1973, p. 103.

⁵⁴ In an anonymous 1826 review (über die Berliner Ausstellung) republished in Börsch-Supan and Jähnig, 1973, p. 110.

⁵⁵ In Töpfer’s 1826 review titled ‘Erste Kunstaussstellung in Hamburg’ in *Originalien aus dem Gebiete der Wahrheit, Kunst, Laune und Phantasie* republished in Börsch-Supan and Jähnig, 1973, p. 107; ‘man kann aber den Wunsch nicht unterdrücken, daß der Künstler uns öfter mit Gegenstände erfreuen möge, die uns näher liegen’ in an anonymous 1826 review (über die Berliner Ausstellung von 1826) republished in Börsch-Supan and Jähnig, 1973, p. 110.

***Das Eismeer* and Appleton's Habitat Theory**

Jay Appleton's landscape theory, first published in 1975, may explain why critics responded so negatively to *Das Eismeer* when it was first exhibited.⁵⁶ In his 'Habitat' and 'Prospect-refuge' theories, Appleton argues that there is a biological link between the perceived landscape and aesthetic pleasure. According to his habitat theory, the relationship between the human observer and the perceived environment is basically the same as the relationship between a creature and its habitat. We are drawn, in other words, to environments that can provide basic needs such as shelter and food; this is why we feel satisfaction when we contemplate a landscape that can fulfil basic requirements for survival. The landscapes we deem 'aesthetic' are thus those that appear to us as habitats, whether real or representational.⁵⁷ Working together with his notions of habitat, Appleton's prospect-refuge theory claims that another basic need is the desire to 'see without being seen'. A landscape that offers both a good opportunity to see (prospect) and a good opportunity to hide (refuge) is therefore – like a scene providing a habitat for survival – more aesthetically satisfying than a landscape that does not.⁵⁸ Although *Das Eismeer* does have some elements of a conventional landscape, it does not seem to fit with Appleton's explanation of what is typically experienced as an aesthetic painting. Rather than offering access to food and shelter, *Das Eismeer* strands its viewer in the foreground of an intensely prospect-dominant landscape that is filled, in every direction, with hazard.⁵⁹

Comparisons with two Arctic scenes that have been suggested as sources of inspiration for *Das Eismeer* reveal the degree to which Friedrich's painting may have made its viewers uneasy and, by association, challenged basic notions of aesthetics. Abraham Hondius's *Arctic Adventure* of 1677 and William Westall's engraving of Frederick William Beechey's *Situation of HMS Hecla and Griper Sept 20th 1819* of

⁵⁶ Appleton, 1996 (1975).

⁵⁷ Appleton, 1996 (1975), pp. 58, 62-63, 246.

⁵⁸ Appleton, 1996 (1975), pp. 63-66.

⁵⁹ Appleton, 1996 (1975), pp. 130-136.

1821, present views of the Arctic that are, in contrast to *Das Eismeer*, filled with signs of activity and life (**Figs. 2.8, 2.9**).

Identified as a potential point of reference for *Das Eismeer* in personal correspondence between the Friedrich scholars D. Roskamp and Wöllner, Hondius's seventeenth-century painting shows a ship amidst ice in the Arctic.⁶⁰ Although the flat expanse of ice appearing behind the ship in *Arctic Adventure* is similar to the background found in *Das Eismeer*, Hondius's painting offers a more traditional composition comprised of a clear foreground, middle ground and background. The distinction between land and water is also clearly articulated in *Arctic Adventure* – for example, the passage of water separating the people standing in the foreground from the ship in the middle ground. Hondius's view is taken from above, looking down onto the scene wherein objects are rendered according to the laws of linear perspective. In this clear composition, the subject matter of which is easily grasped, the big ship in the middle ground dominates the painting, taking up two thirds of the canvas's height. This strong sign of human presence is supplemented by the human figures populating the scene. In contrast to *Das Eismeer*, wherein the only sign of human presence is a sinking ship, the viewer has several objects and figures to identify with in *Arctic Adventure*.

Applying Appleton's theory to *Arctic Adventure* demonstrates that Hondius's painting is a more prospect-refuge balanced composition than Friedrich's, with the open view to a distant horizon complemented by the dominant refuge symbol of the ship. The ship is, moreover, not going under and the figures populating the scene do not appear to be involved in a rescue operation. Overall, *Arctic Adventure* is far less threatening than Friedrich's *Das Eismeer* and although the landscape Hondius presented to his viewer was an unfamiliar one, it showed that human endeavour in the Arctic was possible.

⁶⁰ HK 1051 Roskamp, 28 June 1957; HK 1051-263.2 Wöllner, 1957 [?]. Roskamp and Wöllner do not know if Friedrich ever viewed this painting.

A more contemporary source of possible inspiration for Friedrich may have been, as other scholars have argued, Parry's narrative from his First Voyage – in particular Westall's engraving titled *Situation of HMS Hecla and Griper, Sept 20th 1819*.⁶¹ Based on an on-the-spot sketch by Beechey, Westall's illustration – the most dramatic appearing in Parry's journal – documents the rescue operation of *HMS Griper*, which was in danger of being destroyed by ice floes off Melville Island.⁶² The image shows two ships at the edge of a field of ice. Behind the ships is the sea, which is enclosed by a mountain in the background. On the icy shore, next to the vessel to the right, four human figures pull a small boat, while on the opposite side the other vessel leans dangerously to one side.

Despite the dramatic situation being displayed, Westall's image does not evoke a strong sense of danger and the landscape is not intimidating. The open and flat terrain in the foreground of Westall's engraving offers a good view, which is – unlike in Friedrich's painting – balanced by the inclusion of the mountain, the size and placement of which serves to limit the prospect and give a feeling of refuge and safe harbour. The ships repeat this impression of refuge and, even though one of them is in danger of being crushed, Westall's overall composition plays down the feeling of hazard and drama. The ground on which the figures are placed is solid and the icebergs do not appear threatening. The impressive look of the second ship, in particular, gives additional reassurances of safety.

Although Friedrich may have looked to these and other existing images and descriptions of the Arctic for ideas on how to represent a landscape he had never seen, his resulting painting was radically different. In contrast to Hondius's and Westall's images, which show people working in and overcoming the challenges presented by the Arctic landscape, Friedrich composed a scene suggesting that the exploration of this region was nothing short of suicide.

⁶¹ Wolf, 2003, p. 74. Leighton and Bailey, 1990, p. 29. Grave, 2001, p. 25.

⁶² For a description of this event see Parry, 1821a, pp. 92-93.

In the 1820s this extremely negative image of Arctic exploration did not fit with mainstream ideas about Britain's involvement in this region. When Friedrich exhibited his painting in 1824 and 1826, the British search for a Northwest Passage was still largely characterised by progress – few lives and resources had as of yet been lost, and there was a relatively rapid advancement westwards through the Canadian Arctic already between 1818 and 1820.⁶³ Indeed, as evidenced in expedition accounts produced at this time, the Arctic was often – in contrast to later texts – represented as a place that was not only commercially attractive but, at least onboard ships, a liveable and even homely environment. Returning from his First Voyage, Ross for example was clearly positive to the Arctic, arguing that the region could prove a profitable trading market for Britain:

Arctic Highlanders, might be easily instructed to collect these skins [...] The ivory of the sea-unicorn, the sea-horse's teeth, and the bear's teeth, may also be considered as articles for trade. All these could be procured for European commodities, such as knives, nails, small harpoon-heads, pieces of iron, wood of any description, crockery ware, and various cheap and useful utensils and tools; both to the great benefit of the merchant, and to that of this secluded race of human beings.⁶⁴

While Ross itemised the range of goods that might easily be attained from Inuit in exchange for items mass-produced in Britain, Parry's successful First Voyage appeared to prove that it was possible to survive well northwest of Inuit settlements. Indeed, Parry conveyed a rather comfortable idea about Arctic exploration, describing in confident terms his crew's production of a theatrical play and newspaper during the harshest winter months.⁶⁵

⁶³ While Ross's 1818 expedition turned back just before reaching the 84th meridian, Parry crossed the 110th meridian – which was more than half the Passage – only two years later. See Fleming, 2001 (1998), pp. 73, 89.

⁶⁴ Ross, 1819, p. 119.

⁶⁵ Parry, 1821a, chapter 5. The newspaper, entitled *The North Georgia Gazette and Winter Chronicle*, was later published in London. Sabine, 1821. Fleming describes Parry's winter camp, which was icebound for eight months at Melville Island, as being 700 miles from the nearest settlement and at a place the Inuit did not 'bother' to go. Fleming, 2001 (1998), p. 74.

Exposing Man's Hubris

Given the negative message conveyed by Friedrich's painting in a climate of overall optimism, it may be that *Das Eismeer* is better understood as having more in common with caricatures of Arctic exploration circulating in Britain, such as those published by George Cruikshank and Charles Williams in 1819 (**Figs. 2.10-2.11**). Parodying Ross's First Voyage of 1818, Cruikshank's and Williams's images obviously ridicule Arctic exploration.

Cruikshank's *Landing the Treasures, or Results of the Polar Expedition!!!* shows a parade of officers and sailors heading towards the British Museum armed with a range of useless objects discovered in the Arctic – red snow, dogs, a bag of granite and a jar of 'Worms found in the intestines of a seal'. They are cheered on by a public who express their excitement that the explorers have brought back the 'North Pole', 'Jack Frost' and 'Eursa Major'. In a similarly satirical attack on Ross's expedition, Williams's *Curious Dogs, from the North Pole; or the Return of the Arctic Expedition!!* shows another parade of men, this time on its way to the Prince Regent.⁶⁶ Like Cruikshank, William also draws attention to the red snow, which was in fact collected by Ross's expedition, mocking this 'find' through the figure of a sailor riding a polar bear, exclaiming 'Come push on Mr Bruin or we shall have the snow balls run through the basket'.

Both Cruikshank's and William's images set up a knowing juxtaposition between the pomp and grandeur surrounding Arctic exploration and – in their opinion – the actual triviality of its discoveries. Their caricatures not only satirise the elusive goals and useless gains of Arctic exploration, they also seem to make fun of public ignorance and a general lack of critique. Cruikshank's and William's images are also caricatures of the ideals of self-sacrifice that were often associated with Arctic exploration. Cruikshank's drawing, for example, seizes on the very real

⁶⁶ This is suggested by the inscriptions on a flag and basket reading 'GPR Sovereign of the North Pole' and 'red snow balls for P.R.' respectively. 'P.R.' is most likely a shortening for 'Prince Regent', as suggested in George, 1949, p. 875.

consequences of frostbites – namely, the loss of extremities through prolonged exposure to the cold – picturing Ross with a ludicrous black tie-on nose prosthesis.

Although Cruikshank's and Williams's caricatures are of a completely different genre from *Das Eismeer*, and there are no visual similarities between their works and Friedrich's, they nonetheless seem to be intellectually linked. Like Williams's and Cruikshank's drawings, Friedrich's aesthetically unpleasant icescape implies that it was a strong statement against Arctic exploration in its time. As in the caricatures, *Das Eismeer* represents the Arctic as a place devoid of any natural resources useful to man. Exhibited at a time when the German public seem to have eagerly followed the progress of Britain's involvement in the Arctic, Friedrich's representation of this region as unconquerable could have provoked its viewers. His desolate landscape seems to point out the futility of Arctic exploration, perhaps commenting on the limits of man and warning against the crossing of natural boundaries at a time when Europe thought itself unstoppable.

Frederic Edwin Church's *The Icebergs*, 1861

In April 1861 and February 1862, Frederic E. Church (1826-1900) exhibited his latest 'Great Picture' *The North*, a work measuring 163.2 by 285.1 cm, in New York City and Boston respectively.⁶⁷ The impressive painting presented a seascape of icebergs devoid of human or animal life (the broken mast in the foreground was added later) (**Fig. 2.12**). The only connection to land and solidity Church offered his American audience was a brown-red boulder on top of the ice in the middle ground. The ice in the foreground is painted in great detail – we can observe its slippery surface, blue veins and the reflection of afternoon sunlight. A green, illuminated ice-grotto in the middle ground shows the effect water has on the colour of the ice. In the background a huge two-part iceberg in a snow-white colour, crowned with a dome-like top appears and, to the left of this, the scene opens up and a few occasional

⁶⁷ Today, the painting is known as *The Icebergs*.

icebergs float in an otherwise clear and open sea. The dark colour of the sky reflects in the water, and clouds surround the highest peaks of the iceberg in the background.

The North fits well within Church's oeuvre overall in terms of both its geographical subject matter and terms of production. Described by his American contemporaries as an 'artistic Humboldt of the New World', Church was famous for his paintings of landscapes of various and distant places on the American continent – all of which he visited in person.⁶⁸ Two years before he exhibited *The North* in New York, Church had travelled to Newfoundland and Labrador together with the reverend Louis Legrand Noble, creating at least 89 sketches of icebergs.⁶⁹ This was an approach Church had used previously – paintings such as *The Heart of the Andes* and *Niagara*, for example, were similarly based on field drawings Church had produced during extensive travels throughout the Americas during the 1850s (**Figs. 2.13, 2.14**).⁷⁰

Church exhibited *The North* as an elaborate and profitable one-man, one-work show, a display technique he had used in two previous displays of large-scale landscape paintings showing sublime scenes of 'American' nature.⁷¹ Supplied with a pamphlet, the viewer could enter the exhibition at the cost of twenty-five cents.⁷² Possibly borrowing from panoramas, Church sought to offer a comprehensive experience, with his emphasis on presentation aiming to convince the viewer that the exhibition of a single piece of art was worth the entrance fee.⁷³ Before viewing panoramas, the visitors to these popular exhibitions typically passed through a series of dark

⁶⁸ *New York Times* 17 March 1863.

⁶⁹ These sketches are in the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York. It is believed that they represent more or less all the sketches Church created in the Arctic. Carr, 1980, p. 53.

⁷⁰ Other paintings of this type include *The Natural Bridge, Virginia* (1852, University of Virginia Art Museum) and *The Falls of Tequendama, Near Bogota, New Granada* (1852, Cincinnati Art Museum).

⁷¹ *Niagara* was shown in New York and London in 1857, while *The Heart of the Andes* toured several American cities in the north in 1859 and 1860.

⁷² Carr, 1980, p. 80.

⁷³ Oettermann, 1997, pp. 49-51.

corridors and stairwells, which were intended to help them forget the noise of the city and adjust their eyes to the low level of light inside the rotunda.⁷⁴

In a similar fashion, Church draped the entrance corridor to his exhibition with brown fabric to serve as a sombre antechamber to the gallery space.⁷⁵ Repeating the panorama's 'false terrain' – the area between the viewer and the canvas, often filled with three dimensional objects and figures and imitation of natural ground – Church decorated the walls with purple-maroon cloths and covered the floor with an emerald green carpet that resembled the colour of the ice-grotto in his painting.⁷⁶ The painting itself featured at the end of the gallery, and the way it was presented, inside a massive wooden frame covered with draperies, was associated with a view through a window.⁷⁷ In addition to the panorama, Church's presentation belongs to a tradition of displaying large-scale history paintings. As Andrew Wilton points out, Benjamin West – an Anglo-American painter influential in the late eighteenth century and first two decades of the nineteenth – hung his large canvases low to the ground in order to enhance the viewer's participation in and immediate experience of the scenery represented.⁷⁸ The same rationale may be at work in Church's presentation – namely, that his sublime landscapes would overwhelm and enhance a feeling of the sublime also by means of display. A photograph showing how Church presented *The Heart of the Andes* at the Metropolitan Sanitary Fair in 1864 suggests that he may also have hung *The North* low on the wall so the viewer could, more easily, 'enter' the scene (Fig. 2.15).

Church's display and painting of a part of the world few had experienced first hand did not fail to impress the American viewer. According to the *Springfield Daily Republican's* correspondent in New York, 'You forget the gallery, the ostentatious

⁷⁴ Oettermann, 1997, pp. 49-51; Comment, 1999, pp. 101-102.

⁷⁵ *Boston Evening Transcript* 11 March 1862.

⁷⁶ Oettermann, 1997, pp. 49, 71.

⁷⁷ M.C.A. *Springfield (Mass.) Daily Republican*, 4 May 1861, quoted in Harvey, 2002, p. 92.

⁷⁸ Wilton, 2002, pp. 15-17.

frame to sail out unawares into one of God's primeval solitudes'.⁷⁹ Similarly, T.L. Cuyler in the New York *Independent* noted 'Through this carved wood-work, as through an open window, we looked at once, nearly two thousand miles away – to Labrador'.⁸⁰ After the exhibitions in New York and Boston, Church shipped his painting to Britain, where it was similarly displayed, first in London and then in Glasgow in 1863.⁸¹ Before the painting left the United States, Church added a broken mast and renamed it with the more specific title *The Icebergs* – the title used today. Entering the art scene of a country that prided itself for its long history of engagement in the Arctic, Church's 'American' perspective could not help but interact with British notions about this region.

Previous Interpretations and Their Problems

After his death, Church remained a somewhat forgotten artist until David C. Huntington commenced his research on Church in the 1950s. In 1966 Huntington published the first biography on Church and helped turn Olana, Church's house in Hudson, New York, into a museum.⁸² Huntington's initiative ignited renewed interest in Church's art that has continued unabated into the present. This is witnessed by a constant stream of exhibitions and publications, including two monographs dedicated exclusively to *The Icebergs*, most of which have been realised by a limited number of scholars.⁸³

Previous art historical research on Church, particularly that of Huntington and his former student Gerald L. Carr, tends to focus on the importance of Church's work to mid nineteenth-century Americans, emphasising how recognised the artist was in his

⁷⁹ M.C.A. *Springfield (Mass.) Daily Republican*, 4 May 1861, quoted in Harvey, 2002.

⁸⁰ Theodore L. Cuyler, "Among the Icebergs", *Independent*, 2 May 1861, quoted in Harvey, 2002, p. 61.

⁸¹ *Daily News* 25 June 1863; *Glasgow Herald* 23 October 1863.

⁸² Huntington, 1966; Howat, 2005, p. x.

⁸³ Carr, 1980; Carr, 1981; Carr, 1994; Carr, 2000; Harvey, 2002; Howat, 2005; Kelly, 1989; Stebbins, 1978; Wilton and Barringer, 2002.

lifetime. In what seems to be a bid to contest some of the early twentieth-century prejudices still present in the 1960s and 1980s, Huntington's scholarship tends to stress Church's role in defining the American identity while taking pains to correct the notion that Church's paintings were sensation-seeking and un-intellectual.⁸⁴ Perhaps inspired by the USA's involvement in the 1960s space race, Huntington's research is particularly focused on Church's art in relationship to the nineteenth-century American belief in Manifest Destiny – the notion that American settlers of the New World were a chosen people who had been allotted the North American continent by God.⁸⁵

In these contexts, Huntington argues that Church was the perfect 'Moses' because he, as a sixth generation New World inhabitant, was 'an archetypal American [...] immune to European influences'.⁸⁶ All of Church's major works thus function for Huntington as 'prophetic landscapes', enabling the American New World immigrant to 'slough off his Old World psyche and be spiritually reborn into the New World' and 'discover himself as the emotional native of a great virgin continent'.⁸⁷ *The Icebergs* was, Huntington argues, a 'celebration of the New World man's imminent oneness with elemental nature', which sought to tell Americans 'that their powers were infinite'.⁸⁸ Carr similarly believes that Church's paintings, with their 'limitless horizons, rich detail, and compelling pan-American subject matter', were 'icons of an expanding self-confident nation which believed itself sanctified by Deity'.⁸⁹ Along with Church's paintings from Niagara Falls, the Caribbean and the Andes, Carr argues that *The Icebergs* showed a specifically American 'New World' site.⁹⁰

As well as advocating a reading of Church's works in terms of patriotism and Manifest Destiny, Church scholars typically argue for a spiritual-religious reading of his art, although such interpretations vary in relation to *The Icebergs*. Some authors,

⁸⁴ Huntington, 1966, p. x. Huntington quoted in Carr, 1980, pp. 9, 11.

⁸⁵ Huntington, 1966, pp. 10-11.

⁸⁶ Huntington, 1966, p. 10.

⁸⁷ Huntington, 1966, pp. ix, xi.

⁸⁸ Huntington, 1966, p. 87.

⁸⁹ Carr, 1980, p. 22.

⁹⁰ Carr, 2000, p. 15.

such as Andrew Wilton, connect the supposed religious content of *The Icebergs* to the American sublime.⁹¹ Referring to texts and visions of Thomas Cole, Ralph Waldo Emerson and the Prussian naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, Wilton argues that an important part of American theories of the sublime was the notion of ‘divine nature’. While Cole deemed the wilderness ‘a fitting place to speak of God’, Emerson argued that nature was ‘the organ through which the universal spirit speaks to the individual’ and Humboldt, who inspired several American writers and artists, believed everything in creation should be taken as evidence of the divine order of the universe.⁹² Unlike Wilton, Carr and Tim Barringer argue that *The Icebergs* has a clear Christian message. Barringer believes the painting assumed this meaning after Church added the mast, which for him communicates the message ‘that death is followed by redemption through Christ’.⁹³ Carr augments this religious interpretation with an anthropomorphic reading of *The Icebergs*. Finding ‘skull-like features’ in the foreground and, by the grotto’s entrance, a floating ‘ice siren’, he argues that: ‘the domed and pinnacled main iceberg becomes a natural cathedral, and the mast must also conclusively serve as a sign of the Cross, a reminder that salvation is attained through self-sacrifice in the name of God’.⁹⁴

As several art historians have noted, Church was interested in contemporary exploration of the Arctic. This is evident for example in his friendship with the American explorer Isaac Hayes, whose sled dog Church painted upon Hayes’s return from the Arctic in 1861.⁹⁵ Church also owned a copy of Elisha Kent Kane’s two-volume narrative from the Second Grinnell Expedition, an American contribution to the Franklin searches in the 1850s.⁹⁶ Given such clear evidence that Church was inspired by contemporary exploration of the Arctic, interpreting *The Icebergs* as an expression of Manifest Destiny seems problematic. First of all, the region represented was not of course American – Newfoundland had been a British colony since 1713. Secondly, Newfoundland and Labrador were historically rich in whales,

⁹¹ Wilton, 2002, pp. 14-15, 31.

⁹² Wilton, 2002, pp. 14-15. Novak, 1980, p. 7.

⁹³ Wilton and Barringer 2002, p. 226

⁹⁴ Carr, 1981, p. 111; see also Carr, 1980, pp. 72, 82.

⁹⁵ Carr, 1994, p. 277.

⁹⁶ Carr, 1980, p. 39.

seals and fish. In addition to an indigenous population, European fishermen and missionaries also inhabited this area at the time of Church's visit. Church, however, represented this region without a trace of life, suggesting – like Friedrich's *Das Eismeer* – that the Arctic was not an inhabitable place. If New World man's destiny were to settle here, as Huntington and Carr suggest, what would his prospects be? The icy seascape in Church's painting seems a decidedly poor version of a 'Garden of Eden'.⁹⁷

In their emphasis on Church's importance as an American artist and their efforts to reclaim his place in the canon of art history, Church scholars such as Carr and Huntington seem inclined to over-intellectualise *The Icebergs*.⁹⁸ This is most clear in Carr's analysis, which surprisingly reads the ice as representing features that, objectively, are not present in the image. Rather than basing his analysis on tangible evidence, Carr appears to be subjectively reading into Church's painting. This problematic approach is repeated in his and other scholars' interpretations of the mast. Although the social-intellectual background, including mid-nineteenth-century notions and experiences of nature as divine, are clearly relevant for understanding Church overall, it is not obvious that the mast signifies a cross in *The Icebergs*. There are much clearer examples in Church's oeuvre of Christian references. *The Heart of the Andes* and *To the Memory of Cole*, for example, both feature a Latin cross adorned with flowers and, in the former, people kneeling (**Fig. 2.16**). The crosses in these paintings illustrate an essential feature of this symbol – its simplicity. Unlike the unambiguous meaning of the crosses appearing in *The Heart of the Andes* and *To the Memory of Cole*, the mast in *The Icebergs* is a confusion of ropes, sail and broken crosstree (**Fig. 2.17**). This not only obscures a reading of it as a cross, it suggests that the broken mast may be just that and no more. Considering that Church included these remnants of a ship specifically for the exhibitions in Britain, it seems more likely that the mast was intended as a reference to the Franklin expedition.

⁹⁷ Carr, 2000, p. 15. Kelly uses similar language when writing of a 'second Eden'. See Kelly, 1989, p. 14.

⁹⁸ See Huntington's introduction to Carr, 1980, pp. 9-10.

While these religious and patriotic readings of *The Icebergs* are still very much in circulation, the British context of Church's painting has yet to be adequately researched.⁹⁹ Thus, although Carr's and Harvey's monographs on *The Icebergs* are helpful for their comprehensive references to and inclusions of nineteenth-century newspaper and journal articles related to Church's painting, neither author examines this material in any detail. In Carr's publication, for example, the British reviews are mostly used to highlight how well the painting was received in London. Harvey, for her part, does not analyse the reviews at all – they are simply included at the end of her book as an appendix.¹⁰⁰ In his treatment of *The Icebergs* in the specific contexts of Arctic studies Potter does not really add anything new to the existing literature on Church. While he notes the 'otherworldly' associations made in British reviews, he does not go on to examine this. Like Carr, Potter is primarily concerned with the positive reception of *The Icebergs* in London, in particular the way it was compared to with the work of European masters like Turner.¹⁰¹

The Icebergs in London

On 20 June 1863, the doors opened to a private preview of Church's solo exhibition of *The Icebergs* at the German Gallery on New Bond Street in London.¹⁰² Among the party of exclusively invited guests were geologist John Tyndall, Lady Franklin and a group of Arctic explorers famous for their involvement in the Franklin search

⁹⁹ In his substantial biography on Church, Howat references Carr in order to argue that '*The Icebergs* was deeply important to Church both for religious and patriotic reasons'. See Howat, 2005, p. 106.

¹⁰⁰ Carr, 1980, pp. 88-93; Harvey, 2002, pp. 66, 87-96.

¹⁰¹ Potter, 2007, pp. 180-189.

¹⁰² According to the *Court Circular*, *The Icebergs* was intended to be on display for three or four weeks. This timeframe must have been expanded as the exhibition was advertised as late as 12 August 1863. In October 1863, *The Icebergs* went on display in the 'Fine-Art Galleries' on Buchanan Street, Glasgow. *Court Circular* 4 July 1863; *Morning Post* 12 August 1863. *Glasgow Herald* 20 October 1863; *Glasgow Herald* 23 October 1863.

expeditions.¹⁰³ While these viewers were the first to publicly experience Church's altered composition, a surviving oil study of 1860 shows that Church had originally considered including a shipwreck in his painting (**Fig. 2.18**). The reason why Church may have gone back to this idea after his exhibitions in New York and Boston could be that – in response to the initial reviews of his work – he wanted to make the scene more approachable to audiences who naturally had little or no opportunity to visit the Arctic themselves.¹⁰⁴

It seems that the American viewers had struggled to take in Church's representation of an environment with which they were so completely unfamiliar. The *Boston Evening Transcript* commented for example that 'one hardly knows what to say about it [...] You have no previous knowledge as to test and try it by. You may fancy it a composition representing crystal and enamelled rock; or imagine it a delineation of high Alpine scenery'.¹⁰⁵ The *Albion* similarly cautioned that 'Ordinary observers' were likely to be disappointed to find that Church's painting included no 'familiar objects', giving 'no connecting link of any sort between themselves and the canvas'.¹⁰⁶ The total absence of life seems to have left the American viewer feeling alienated, perhaps causing them to associate Church's scene with something other than a representation of a worldly environment. The *Boston Daily Transcript* for example compared the image to 'the great white throne of the Apocalypse', while the *New York Daily Tribune* argued that the scene was 'as if from the day of the creation when the earth was without form and void, and only the firmament divided the waters under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament, and God hung a light in the heaven to divide day from the night'.¹⁰⁷ While such reactions to his painting may have convinced Church to add a mast to his composition in an attempt to bring in scale and meaning, *The Icebergs* was of course also entering a different market.

¹⁰³ *Court Journal* 27 June 1863, p. 633.

¹⁰⁴ *World* 29 April 1861. *New York Evening Express* 27 April 1861.

¹⁰⁵ *Boston Evening Transcript* 27 May 1861.

¹⁰⁶ The *Albion* 4 May 1861, quoted in Harvey, 2002, p. 92.

¹⁰⁷ *Boston Evening Transcript* 21 March 1862; *New York Daily Tribune* 24 April 1861.

Church had not succeeded in selling *The Icebergs* in America and, as Harvey points out, he might have altered the painting to attract a potential British buyer.¹⁰⁸ Without the mast, *The Icebergs* showed a ‘timeless’ scene that fit within the context of an American aesthetic. Devoid of any historical reference, it showed the sublime wilderness of a ‘virgin’ continent.¹⁰⁹ British aesthetics were already familiar with the natural sublime and, by contrast, stressed the importance of history. Ruskin for example argued that the essential problem for American landscape painters was that their country was ‘without any history’.¹¹⁰ A similar view was expressed by an art critic writing for the *Athenaeum* who, in a review of Church’s painting, commented that American landscape painting was ‘materialistic; seeking its means of expression in translation of literal facts – poetic and grand in themselves, rather than in their mental associations’.¹¹¹ With the intention of making his work ‘more’ than a representation of the natural sublime and more in line with British tastes, Church may have included the mast in order to add time and historical reference.

Unlike the United States, Britain had a long history of Arctic engagement through settling, whaling and exploration and, as Harvey argues, this was probably what inspired the British railroad magnate Edward William Watkin to buy Church’s painting.¹¹² Watkin’s ambition was to develop a trans-Canadian railway system that would solve the problem of a Northwest Passage by replacing the hazardous seaward route with overland train tracks. For Watkin, the mast in Church’s painting could thus have symbolised Britain’s centuries of explorations to find the maritime route his overland railroad would replace.¹¹³ Moreover, Church may have intended the ship remnants may as a specific reference to Franklin and, in inviting Franklin’s widow to his opening in London, he was probably making a deliberate gesture to enhance this association. Lady Franklin’s presence at the exhibition of a painting showing the Arctic landscape in which her husband had died most likely reinforced the mast’s allusion without being too specific or ghoulish.

¹⁰⁸ Harvey, 2002, p. 45.

¹⁰⁹ Wilton, 2002, p. 14.

¹¹⁰ Wilton, 2002, p. 31.

¹¹¹ *Athenaeum* 27 June 1863.

¹¹² Harvey, 2002, p. 69.

¹¹³ Harvey, 2002, p. 69.

A Question of Colours

Reviews of Church's exhibitions in London and Glasgow show that the British public did not, however, pick up on or take much interest in the presence or potential meaning of the mast that had been added. While reviews published in the *Daily News* and *Glasgow Herald* may allude to Franklin in commenting that the remnants were from some 'gallant vessel', *The Illustrated London News* makes reference to simply a 'fishing-boat'.¹¹⁴ Most of the British reviews of *The Icebergs* do not mention the mast at all, and – in a marked contrast to the overwhelming emphasis on Franklin present in reviews of Landseer's *Man Proposes – God Disposes* only one year later – it appears that not one clear association was made between the Franklin disaster and Church's painting.¹¹⁵ A reason for this disassociation from the tragedy that had captivated the whole nation for so many years might be that the advertisements for the exhibition and the text that featured in the pamphlet handed out in the gallery preconditioned the British public as to how to respond to Church's painting. While the newspaper advertisements emphasised that the painting was based on Church's field drawings from the Arctic, the pamphlet provided a highly glaciological account of the scene.¹¹⁶ Playing up to the generally wider scientific mindset among the educated classes at mid century, these texts may have led the audience to read

¹¹⁴ *Daily News* 25 June 1863; *Glasgow Herald* 23 October 1863. *Illustrated London News* 4 July 1863.

¹¹⁵ *Athenaeum* 27 June 1863. Bayley, 1 September 1863. *Star* 22 June 1863; *Guardian* 29 July 1863; *Manchester Guardian* 19 June 1863; *Morning Advertiser* 22 June 1863; *Morning Herald* 22 June 1863; *Daily News* 25 June 1863; *Illustrated London News* 4 July 1863; Rosetti, October 1863; *Reader* 18 July 1863; *Spectator* 1 August 1863; *Times* 3 July 1863; *Manchester Guardian* 23 October 1863. Six out of these fourteen reviews mention the mast.

¹¹⁶ Advertisement in *Standard* 22 June 1863. 'V' in *The Spectator* mentions a 'programme' handed out by the entrance to the gallery. Descriptions of the painting in *The Times* and *Illustrated London News* are strongly reminiscent of the broadsheet for the New York and Boston exhibitions. For these reasons, it seems likely that the same pamphlet was used in the United States and Britain. *Spectator* 1 August 1863. *Times* 3 July 1863. *Illustrated London News* 4 July 1863.

Church's painting as a truthful representation of icebergs off the coast of Labrador and Newfoundland instead of associating it with Franklin's expedition.

It was not Franklin but the overwhelming colourfulness of Church's scene that clearly captivated and surprised British viewers. An example of this is the review published in *The Guardian*, which expressed a degree of shock at the fact that Church's Arctic scene did not include a single hint of white: 'The sky varies from a dull lead colour to a still duller olive green, but a gleam of sunshine illumines the icebergs and calls out the most delicate tints of green, grey, violet, yellow, and orange. Of pure white, of which we should have thought there would be plenty, there is absolutely none'.¹¹⁷ Similarly, *The Star* commented that 'Wonderful and surprising as the shapes which hoary-headed Winter builds up in the waters of the North, more surprising still are the colours with which these varied shapes and forms are painted'.¹¹⁸ Considering their familiarity with the Arctic through Britain's long history of engagement in this region, why was it Church's 'truthful' representation that so astonished the public?

Although, as David claims, one of the persisting stereotypes in the British nineteenth-century imagination was of the 'colourless' Arctic, Church was certainly not the first to lay claim to the presence of colour in this region.¹¹⁹ Expedition accounts published over forty years before *The Icebergs* was exhibited in Britain provide examples of written descriptions of colour in the Arctic landscape. In the published narrative of his First Voyage, Ross for example writes:

It is hardly possible to imagine any thing more exquisite than the variety of tints which these icebergs display; by night as well as by day they glitter with a vividness of colour beyond the power of art to represent. While the white portions have the brilliancy of silver, their colours are as various and splendid as those of the rainbow¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ *Guardian* 29 July 1863.

¹¹⁸ *Star* 22 June 1863. For other examples see Bayley, 1 September 1863; *Morning Advertiser* 22 June 1863; *Manchester Guardian* 19 June 1863.

¹¹⁹ David, 2000, pp. 37-41.

¹²⁰ Ross, 1819, p. 30.

A later instance of the recognition of colour is Elisha Kent Kane's published account of his search for Franklin in the early 1850s, in which he writes of an iceberg:

On our road we were favored with a gorgeous spectacle, which hardly any excitement of [sic] peril could have made us overlook. The midnight sun came out over the northern crest of the great berg, our late "fast friend," kindling variously-colored fires on every part of its surface, and making the ice around us one great resplendency of gemwork, blazing carbuncles, and rubies and molten gold.¹²¹

In addition to these textual accounts, examples of more colourful paintings of Arctic land and seascapes do exist. One example is George Back's *View in the Arctic Regions*, showing a vessel and icebergs on a calm evening with sunlight reflecting in the water (**Fig. 2.19**). Although Back's representation of icebergs is limited to white, grey and some blue colours, the sunlight adds warm tones to the sky and water.

Hints of colour are also expressed in descriptions of Arctic panoramas. A review of Ross's and Robert Burford's 1834 *View of the Continent of Boothia* published in *The Times* singles out the celestial phenomena on view, commenting that the panorama would likely surprise the viewer because it did not show the Arctic as 'dull and monotonous' but included 'effects singularly striking and beautiful'.¹²² The pamphlet provided to the panorama pointed to other sources of colour in the scene, explaining how the ice was represented in various shades of blue, emerald and violet.¹²³

Despite such occasional references to colour, it seems that notions of the Arctic as 'white and dreary' were those most often communicated to the general public. Barrow's critique of Ross's account of 'rainbow' coloured icebergs, for example, effectively ridicules Ross for making such incredulous claims: 'We do not well see how this can be; icebergs display no colour by night, and those exhibited by day are confined to blue and green'.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Kane, 1856, p. 37. Kane's journal was published in London in 1856 and again in 1861.

¹²² *Times* 14 January 1834.

¹²³ See Burford, 1834.

¹²⁴ *Quarterly Review* April 1819, p. 213.

David has also explored the issue of colour, arguing that the explorers' mediocre abilities as artists were one reason for the persisting conception of the Arctic as white and colourless. His tables of Arctic visual imagery show that most officers who painted the Arctic generally avoided representing colourful phenomena, presumably due to the representational difficulties these posed.¹²⁵ Representing the ways in which icebergs reflected sunlight seems to have been a considerable challenge, as is apparent in two versions of Ross's *A Remarkable Iceberg* that were published by John Murray in February 1819. Comparing these two engravings suggests that explorers and engravers found it problematic to represent icebergs in colours other than white. While one engraving shows a densely copper and slightly green coloured iceberg, in the second the copper colour is mostly covered up by white (**Figs. 2.20, 2.21**). This 'colourless' stereotype is further repeated in professional paintings produced in Britain and beyond that tended to show the Arctic as either 'white' or monochrome blue-green, such as Ward's *The Swan and Isabella* of about 1830, François-Auguste Biard's *Combat contre des ours blancs* of about 1839 and François-Etienne Musin's *HMS Erebus in the Ice* of 1846 (**Figs. 2.22, 2.23**).

Church and Humboldt

Though Church alluded to peril and disaster in his work, his colourful painting of icebergs in the afternoon sun on a calm day broke with typical imagery of the region by representing the Arctic as picturesque. Indeed, Church painted *The Icebergs* broadly according to the seventeenth-century compositional formula found in Claude Lorraine's Italianate landscapes. Church's composition is framed by a *repoussoir* on the one side, behind which the view recedes into the distance following a zigzag pattern of *terra firma* overlapping water and contrasting areas of light and shade. However, instead of the foreground trees and rolling hills intersecting a calm Mediterranean vista that characterise Claude's landscapes, Church presented an Arctic seascape with rigid and inanimate icebergs. This surprising contrast between composition and scene may have been used to subvert nineteenth-century

¹²⁵ David, 2000, pp. 39-40.

expectations and the limits of landscape painting. At the same time, this ‘taming’ of the wild by placing it within the constraints of a clear Claudian composition located *The Icebergs* within established conventions of harmony and beauty, with the bright colours Church used seeming to add to the picturesque quality of the painting.

Even though Church’s painting may have challenged popular perceptions about the Arctic, contemporary viewers do not seem to have questioned whether *The Icebergs* gave a realistic representation of the region. On the contrary, reviews of the exhibition show that Church was repeatedly acclaimed for his accuracy. The *Morning Herald* for example wrote that *The Icebergs* was ‘painted with so much adherence to truth as to satisfy the recollections of Arctic voyagers’, while a letter to the editor published in *The Times* pointed to the ‘scientific’ value of Church’s painting, arguing that the icebergs appearing in his scene offered an eloquent visual explanation for the varying weather in Northern Europe.¹²⁶

There are probably many reasons why Church’s painting was convincing as an accurate representation of the Arctic. One important factor was Church’s established public image as an artist-adventurer. The *Art Journal* described Church as one of the ‘Livingstones of the Beautiful’ for example, while *The Star* similarly ranked Church foremost amongst the ‘adventurous’ landscape painters of ‘to-day’.¹²⁷

If Church’s British audiences were already acquainted with his approach, this time his trip to Newfoundland and Labrador had also been documented in the journal kept by his travel companion, Louis Legrand Noble.¹²⁸ Published two years prior to the showing of *The Icebergs* in Britain, Noble’s *After Icebergs with a Painter* gave a thorough account of Church’s close and diligent study of icebergs and was further illustrated with lithographs based on Church’s images.

Accompanying Church’s established public image was the notion that his grand-scale landscape paintings were rooted in science, with Church’s contemporaries in

¹²⁶*Morning Herald* 22 June 1863. Rawlinson, 7 July 1863.

¹²⁷ Bayley, 1 September 1863; *Star* 22 June 1863.

¹²⁸ Noble, 1861.

the United States being well aware of his fascination for Humboldt in particular. The American art critic Henry T. Tuckerman for example argued that Humboldt's written descriptions of South America found 'their pictorial counterpart' in Church's paintings.¹²⁹ Church was certainly an admirer of Humboldt, who was before Darwin's emergence later in the century, 'probably the [Western] world's most famous and influential intellectual'.¹³⁰ Indeed, before Humboldt's death, Church had planned to ship *The Heart of the Andes* to Berlin in order to 'have the satisfaction of placing before Humboldt a transcript of the scenery which delighted his eyes sixty years ago – and which he had pronounced to be the finest in the world'.¹³¹ Whereas scholars have examined Church's 'Humboltian' view on nature and landscape painting in general, the existing literature on Church does not analyse Humboldt's aesthetic theory in relation to *The Icebergs*.¹³²

Humboldt's aesthetic theory, as outlined in his chapter on landscape painting in the second volume of *Cosmos*, corresponds well with Church's general oeuvre.¹³³ Humboldt believed that the purpose of landscape painting was to enhance a love for and knowledge of nature, including 'The comprehension of a natural whole, the feeling of the unity and harmony of the Cosmos'.¹³⁴ It was particularly distant nature – including spectacular mountains and rivers in South America, which Humboldt himself had visited – he thought meaningful to disclose to the public.¹³⁵ In *Cosmos*, Humboldt criticises contemporary landscape painters for not going beyond the 'narrow bounds of the Mediterranean'.¹³⁶ He further complains about the poor

¹²⁹ Tuckerman, 1867, p. 372.

¹³⁰ Gould in Kelly, 1989, p. 96.

¹³¹ Church quoted in Kelly, 1989, p. 94. This was in 1859 and Humboldt died before Church sent the painting.

¹³² Howat, 2005, pp. 43-56; Novak, 1980, pp. 66-77. Gould in Kelly, 1989, pp. 94-107. Kelly in Kelly, 1989, pp. 54-58. Huntington, 1966, pp. 41-42; Carr, 2000, pp. 29-33.

¹³³ von Humboldt, 1854, pp. 3-4, 74-91. Church owned a different edition of *Cosmos*: Alexander von Humboldt. *Cosmos: A Sketch of a Physical Description of the Universe*, translated by E. C. Otte (New York, 1852). Gould in Kelly, 1989, p. 107.

¹³⁴ von Humboldt, 1854, pp. 4, 74, 89, 90.

¹³⁵ von Humboldt, 1854, pp. 4, 83-84, 90-91.

¹³⁶ von Humboldt, 1854, p. 84.

quality of existing representations of the Andes, Himalayas, the Amazon rivers, Borneo and Philippines: 'Those glorious regions have been hitherto visited chiefly by travellers to whom the want of previous artistic training, and variety of scientific occupations, allowed but little opportunity of attaining perfection in landscape painting'.¹³⁷ As well as answering Humboldt's call for professional painters to travel to and expand 'our knowledge of the aspect of distant zones', Church's decision to create large-scale paintings may have been inspired by Humboldt.¹³⁸ In *Cosmos*, Humboldt praises both 'landscape painting on a scale of large dimensions' and the panorama. Humboldt thought panoramas were especially valuable because of their simulation of reality: 'the spectator, enclosed as in a magic circle and withdrawn from all disturbing realities, may the more readily imagine himself surrounded on all sides by a nature in another clime. Impressions are thus produced which in some cases mingle years afterwards by a wandering illusion with the remembrances of natural scenes actually beheld'.¹³⁹

Although scholars have noted that other sources and motives, such as his early apprenticeship with Thomas Cole and reading of John Ruskin, inform Church's landscapes, it is worth emphasising that Church's sketching for and painting of *The Icebergs* are closely aligned with Humboldt's ideas.¹⁴⁰ Humboldt argued that art's aim was to transform the 'actual into the ideal'. At the same time, however, he stressed the importance of fidelity to nature.¹⁴¹ This is seen, for example, in his critique of seventeenth-century landscape painting, where Humboldt comments, 'The particular characters of masses of rock were rarely made objects of careful imitation, except where associated with the foaming waterfall'.¹⁴² Comparing history painting to landscape painting, Humboldt further argues that 'Landscape painting, though no

¹³⁷ von Humboldt, 1854, p. 84.

¹³⁸ Before Newfoundland and Labrador, Church had been twice to South America, in 1853 and 1857. In 1799, Humboldt made a five-year journey in South America, which included stops at places such as Quito and Chimborazo that Church would later visit.

¹³⁹ von Humboldt, 1854, pp. 90-91.

¹⁴⁰ Huntington, 1966, pp. 44-45; Howat, 2005, pp. 9-16; Stebbins, 1978, pp. 4-11.

¹⁴¹ von Humboldt, 1854, p. 79-80.

¹⁴² von Humboldt, 1854, p. 81.

merely imitative art [...] requires a greater mass and variety of direct impressions'.¹⁴³ His instructions resemble descriptions of botanical or geological fieldwork; in addition to immediate contact with nature, artists were encouraged to produce careful on-the-spot studies:

It is only by coloured sketches taken on the spot, that the artist, inspired by the contemplation of these distant scenes, can hope to reproduce their character in paintings executed after his return. He will be able to do so the more perfectly, if he has also accumulated a large number of separate studies of tops of trees, of branches clothed with leaves, adorned with blossoms, or laden with fruit, of fallen trunks of trees overgrown with pothos and orchideæ, of portions of rocks and river banks, as well as of the surface of the ground in the forest, all drawn or painted directly from nature. An abundance of studies of this kind, in which the outlines are well and sharply marked will furnish him with materials enabling him, on his return, to dispense with the misleading assistance afforded by plants grown in hot-houses, or by what are called botanical drawings.¹⁴⁴

Church's making of *The Icebergs* corresponds well with these instructions, as indicated by the oil and pencil sketches – of which about a hundred survive – he created during his trip to Newfoundland and Labrador.¹⁴⁵ Exploring form, his pencil sketches from 1 and 9 July 1859 suggest the variety of shapes of icebergs, while an oil sketch from June-July 1859 titled *Floating Icebergs* investigates the effect of sunlight on these volumes (**Fig. 2.24-2.26**). Painted in bright white, the sides facing the sunlight contrast with the other, darker sides, thus revealing the sculptural forms and shapes of the two icebergs. As seen from this and other oil sketches, including *Iceberg, Newfoundland*; *Iceberg against Evening Sky*; *Icebergs at Midnight, Labrador*; *Iceberg near Twillingate, Newfoundland*; and, *Floating Iceberg*, Church recorded icebergs at different times of day and in various weather conditions (**Figs. 2.27-2.31**). In these six images, sketched in the evening, at midnight, in overcast and clear weather, the colours of the ice are very differently represented. In addition to the many colours displayed in these sketches, the blue line going through the main

¹⁴³ von Humboldt, 1854, p. 86.

¹⁴⁴ von Humboldt, 1854, p. 85.

¹⁴⁵ *New York Daily Tribune* 6 August 1859. Most of Church's sketches for *The Icebergs* are in the Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, Smithsonian Institution, New York; Olana State Historic Site, New York State; and, Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection, Lugano, Switzerland.

iceberg in *Iceberg near Twillingate* would later feature in Church's final painting. The spectrum of colours icebergs reflect as the light conditions change clearly fascinated the artist. In addition to Church's diligent sketching 'at all points, and in all lights, with great care', Noble's journal describes how Church one night threw a burning tar barrel on top of an iceberg in order to explore the effects of light on ice.¹⁴⁶ These sketches seem to suggest that Church wanted to understand and document the essential characteristics of icebergs. At the same time, none of the separate sketches show the same variety of colours as the final painting. Church waited until he got back to his studio in New York before developing concrete ideas for *The Icebergs*. In addition to placing it all in a conventional composition, Church selected the most interesting features and colours from his sketches.

Similar to Church's making of *The Icebergs*, Humboldt thought landscape painting should not be copies of particular scenes but a combination of imitation – or, 'a deep and comprehensive reception of the visible spectacle of external nature' – and the 'creative imagination' of the artist.¹⁴⁷ Tuckerman clearly saw Church's method of working as inspired by Humboldt's texts. In *Book of the Artists*, Tuckerman opens his chapter on Church with the statement that 'The indomitable explorative enterprise of the New England mind of Church has carried into landscape art, the infinite possibilities whereof, as accessory to and illustrative of natural science, were long ago foreseen by Humboldt, into whose views the young American painter entered with ardor and intelligence'.¹⁴⁸ He goes on to describe how Church worked out his subjects 'scientifically': through direct observations of nature and by choosing, combining and 'effectively' reproducing 'his materials'.¹⁴⁹ Finally, Tuckerman's analysis of *The Icebergs* clearly resonates with Humboldt:

Church's picture typifies the north. He has combined, as far as possible in one view, the most characteristic forms and colors. The centre of the berg – the slope of the melting mass, the glint of the upright drift, the transparent blue, the opal gleam, the sapphire refraction, the cliff-like shape, the pearly edge, the glittering stalactite, the opaque alabaster line, the ice-paved sea, the

¹⁴⁶ Noble, 1862, p. 165.

¹⁴⁷ von Humboldt, 1854, p. 86.

¹⁴⁸ Tuckerman, 1867, p. 370.

¹⁴⁹ Tuckerman, 1867, pp. 372, 375.

cold atmosphere and the pale sky-flush, – all we have read and imagined of such a scene, is here brought together with scientific conscientiousness and artistic skill and taste.¹⁵⁰

Tuckerman's description of Church's summarising view of the 'north' seems to link with Humboldt's opinion that landscape painting should give a sense of 'a natural whole' and 'the unity and harmony of the Cosmos'. To American viewers such as Tuckerman, *The Icebergs* combined science and exploration with art. In New York, Church had expressed the authenticity of his painting and its scientific grounding by exhibiting an oil sketch – described as 'the original sketch or study for the main iceberg' – at the sculptor Launt Thompson's studio, concurrently with *The Icebergs*' display at Goupil's Gallery.¹⁵¹ Additionally, during the period between Church's trip to Newfoundland and the opening of the exhibition in New York, the American press regularly printed articles and comments concerned with Church's progress on *The Icebergs* – similarly underscoring the 'scientific' nature of his work. In early August 1859, a couple of newspapers noted that Church had returned from Labrador with over a hundred sketches in colour of icebergs that he was planning to use to compose a painting of the Arctic, while at the end of the year the *New York Daily Tribune* commented that Church had not yet 'unpacked his Newfoundland Sketches of Icebergs'.¹⁵² Later on, in April 1861, the *Boston Evening Transcript* announced that 'Church's "Icebergs" rapidly approach completion [...] The scene delineated is like that so well described by Dr. Kane and other Arctic voyagers [...] The scientific details and artistic skill exhibited will vastly add to Mr. Church's high reputation'.¹⁵³

The Icebergs and Science

Even if Church was not seen as the 'Artistic Humboldt' in Britain, art critics still responded to the scientific grounding of *The Icebergs*. Like the Americans, a review published in the *Art Journal* thought Church's painting successfully combined

¹⁵⁰ Tuckerman, 1867, p. 381.

¹⁵¹ *Commercial Advertiser* (New York), 18 June 1861 quoted in Carr, 1981, p. 111.

¹⁵² *New York Evening Post*, 5 August 1859 in Harvey, 2002, pp. 88-89. *New York Daily Tribune* 6 August 1859. *New York Daily Tribune* 23 December 1859.

¹⁵³ *Boston Evening Transcript* 10 April 1861.

together science and art, representing an elevated and ‘complete truth’. This claim to a higher truth hinged on a contemporary understanding of aesthetics that considered scenes created by ‘aggregate’ and ‘considerably modified by composition’ to be far superior to ‘strictly accurate copies’ from nature.¹⁵⁴

All great and intellectual landscapes are compositions; and it is only in exercising the higher faculties of his mind, in modifying, arranging, and reproducing his materials, so as to lead to extended thoughts, and satisfy the requisites of his art, the painter is, in any sense, a true *artist*. Mr. Church’s object [...] was, no doubt, to give a comprehensive idea of a specific kind of scenery, to group together as much truth as he could homogeneously, naturally, and to represent as he actually saw it, as much as he could, consistently with higher purposes [...] he is far more Turner-esque in his gifts than any other landscape-painter; with a deeper and more delicate fervour in his pursuit of the grand and beautiful in nature than we have been accustomed to look for in recent works¹⁵⁵

While the *Art Journal* heralded *The Icebergs* as a great artistic achievement and compared it to Turner’s works, *The Reader* by contrast argued that Church had failed to transform his meticulous on-the-spot sketches into a sublime landscape painting. According to *The Reader*, *The Icebergs* was too detailed and instructive:

Every hole and cranny, every curve and sinuosity, peak, spire, and pinnacle is catalogued; even all the varied hues and tints of colour are followed and arrested and named as they lie away half-hidden in caverns or blaze with glory in the zenith [...] The description [...] could never have been written when, for the first time, [Church] stood upon the schooner’s deck in the wondrous world of ice. Wonder, mystery, awe, the sense of God’s presence, precede the lower faculty that tickets off the details which we know must form the aggregate of every great display of the forces at work in creation [...] There is neither majesty nor mystery about it; but there is much careful observation of detail [...] The chief and all-important truth which Turner always grasped at has been missed, and consequently the picture has no place in the highest rank.¹⁵⁶

The Reader’s critique of *The Icebergs* for being too didactic and ‘scientific’ may have been enforced by the pamphlet handed out in the gallery, which instructed the visitor in how to view the painting. From the ‘ice in a bay of the berg’, the spectator

¹⁵⁴ Bayley, 1 September 1863, pp. 187-188.

¹⁵⁵ Bayley, 1 September 1863, p. 188.

¹⁵⁶ *Reader* 18 July 1863.

was supposed to be standing while looking from the ‘icy ground’ to the surrounding ice, which was all part of one immense iceberg. From this starting point, the guide went through the different forms and features of the icebergs, explaining how the weather, sea, daylight and temperature affect and change the shape and colours of icebergs. Reading the pamphlet, the viewer would learn that the blue veins going through the iceberg flanking the left foreground are really transparent ice that have formed in the cracks of the glacier and that it is not the ice itself, but the effect of sunlight and the sea that make the ice seem colourful. The text further explained that the lines at the foot of the central iceberg resulted from the iceberg’s elevation after ice had dropped from it, and that its sharp vertical sides were caused by fracture. To some, such as *The Reader*’s art critic, the scientific tone of the pamphlet may have functioned to ‘demystify’ Church’s representation by making it seem like a glaciological study, instead of evoking a feeling of the sublime.

The boulder additionally touched upon a popular topic in contemporary scientific debates concerning the movement of glaciers and the history of the earth – acting, as Timothy Mitchell describes it, as ‘an index to one of the most controversial issues in the history of nineteenth-century geology’.¹⁵⁷ One of the two leading figures in this debate was the geologist Louis Agassiz, who Church and Noble met with on their way to Newfoundland and Labrador.¹⁵⁸ In 1837 Agassiz had come up with a new hypothesis concerning ‘erratic boulders’ in the Jura Mountains in France, essentially providing a theory on the origins of the earth.¹⁵⁹ Agassiz believed that these floating – which had, according to him, previously been balanced at the edge of glaciers – were signs of a past ice age. Agassiz’s main opponent was the British geologist Charles Lyell, who also used the phenomenon of ‘erratic boulders’ as a starting point from which to generate a rather different theory of the history of the earth. Lyell proposed that the North American continent had gradually risen from the ocean, arguing that the presence of these boulders on the coast and in the highlands of the North American continent could only be explained by a ‘continental lift’.¹⁶⁰ Church

¹⁵⁷ Mitchell, 1989, p. 4.

¹⁵⁸ Noble, 1862, p. 6.

¹⁵⁹ Mitchell, 1989, pp. 12-13.

¹⁶⁰ Mitchell, 1989, pp. 13-16.

may have added a boulder to his painting in response to this debate, which people such as Tyndall – a geologist who was invited to the exhibition’s opening in London – would have noticed.

However, it seems that the British viewers were more interested in the rock’s potential relevance to human history. While recognising its origin in the North and transportation southwards on a piece of ice broken off a glacier, the *Illustrated London News* compared the rock in Church’s painting to prehistoric megaliths in Britain: ‘On the arch that spans this cave is a monster block of red stone that the glacier has dragged or the avalanche has hurled from its primitive Greenland bed – a block to form a cromlech, or, in the other ages, an altar of a Druid temple’.¹⁶¹ The *Athenaeum* similarly connected the rock with Europe’s prehistory, commenting that ‘Such ice-borne boulders are said to be the originals of our enormous stones that, grouped by some forgotten people to serve priestly rites, are named Druidic temples or tombs’.¹⁶²

Encounters with Fairyland

In 1863, Church’s painting was seen as an impressive representation of an environment no one before had painted based on scrupulous on-site observation.¹⁶³ At the same time it clearly broke with public perception and knowledge of the Arctic. The conflict between expectation and representation is apparent from the reviews. The *Daily News*, for example, noted that ‘To look at this beauty and think that it is all an inhospitable and frozen desert is almost impossible’. Although finding it difficult to comprehend, however, the art critic in the *Daily News* still believed ‘the

¹⁶¹ *Athenaeum* 27 June 1863; *Illustrated London News* 4 July 1863.

¹⁶² *Athenaeum* 27 June 1863.

¹⁶³ For example, *The Guardian* commented that ‘The colouring is most wonderful and beautiful, and we presume it is true to nature’. Similarly, *The Times* wrote that *The Icebergs* was ‘The only painting ever made of icebergs from close continuous study of them’, and *The Morning Herald* commented ‘this excellent work is painted with as much adherence to truth as to satisfy the recollections of Arctic voyagers’. *Guardian* 29 July 1863; *Times* 3 July 1863; *Morning Herald* 22 June 1863.

wonderful and strange charm of the scene' is not 'exaggerated' and that the painting has 'a most impressive look of truth'.¹⁶⁴ Using a similar reasoning, the *Morning Advertiser* wrote:

The strangeness of the scene, the variety of the prismatic colours, and the extraordinary forms, make it a most interesting composition. We have of course no means of attesting its accuracy [...] but it is vouched for as literally true. It also has the appearance of truth, although it has not the chill, cold, bleak aspect we should have imagined would have prevailed in such a region. But the extreme light, the prismatic colours, the cloudless skies, and deep sea, all tend to remove the ideas of cold and desolation.¹⁶⁵

Even though *The Icebergs* challenged the idea of a colourless Arctic, however, the British may have linked the representation to other, less obvious, perceptions of the North. Despite the fact that the painting was based on sketches from a part of sub-Arctic Canada known for its marine wildlife and long history of Inuit and European settlements, Church represented it as uninhabitable and desolate without any natural resources useful to man. Together with this 'lack' of human, animal or vegetative objects, the inviting representation – the 'prismatic' colours and picturesque composition – evoked a notion of the Arctic as otherworldly. The *Daily News* for example wrote:

The sea is peaceful now, however, and the treacherous waves come rippling into the fairy bay amongst these huge mountains of pearl and opal and emerald, spreading out into a lovely stream of limpid green and blue. In the middle ground is a cavern, hollowed out by the waves and the melting of the ice, which looks, like the haunt of fairies or green-haired nereids or some lovely sirens native to such an enchanted spot.¹⁶⁶

Like the *Daily News*, reviews of *The Icebergs* in the *Athenaeum*, *Illustrated London News*, *Art Journal* and *Star* also mention fabled characters, including mermaids, fairies, witches and sea nymphs.¹⁶⁷ While there are no such figures in *The Icebergs*, Noble's account from his and Church's trip to Newfoundland and Labrador, which is

¹⁶⁴ *Daily News* 25 June 1863.

¹⁶⁵ *Morning Advertiser* 22 June 1863.

¹⁶⁶ *Daily News* 25 June 1863.

¹⁶⁷ Bayley, 1 September 1863; *Athenaeum* 27 June 1863; *Illustrated London News* 4 July 1863; *Star* 22 June 1863.

mentioned in some of the reviews, may have inspired these associations.¹⁶⁸ Noble's many descriptions of icebergs are filled with anthropomorphic comparisons and references to 'otherworldly' characters. For example, Noble describes how the 'Greek-like figure-head' of an iceberg 'possessed' with a 'mournful' and 'supernatural beauty', drew him 'like the fabulous music of the Sirens' and made him forget the dangers of being so close to an iceberg.¹⁶⁹ Elsewhere in his book, Noble relates how:

The ice, a snowy white, lies in vast fields upon the ocean, cracked in all ways [...] this order goes into confusion in a storm, presenting in the succeeding calm a waste of ruins, masses of ice thrown into a thousand forms. In the long, starry nights, or the moonlight, or in the magic brilliancy of the aurora-borealis, the splendor of the scene, dark avenues and parks of sleeping water, the silent glittering of mimic palaces and temples, sparkling minarets and towers, is almost supernatural. [...] To-night, their [the sealers'] vessel may repose in a fairy land or fairy sea [...] and to-morrow night, it may encounter the double dangers of ice and storm.¹⁷⁰

In addition to Noble's inventive descriptions, art critics may have brought their experience of fairy paintings to *The Icebergs*. Popular between 1840 and 1870, fairy paintings by artists such as John Auster Fitzgerald, John Simmons, Joseph Noël Paton, Robert Huskisson and Daniel Maclise often feature caves or grottos and a similar bright translucent green colour as in Church's painting (**Figs. 2.32-2.36**).¹⁷¹

Perhaps because of its inaccessibility, the Arctic 'unknown' was to some degree a place where 'anything' was possible. The dominating theory up until the 1860s for example, was that the North Pole was an open sea – the assumption was that water beyond the vicinity of land did not freeze. This peculiar theory seems to inform Jules Verne's 1864-65 novel *The Adventures of Captain Hatteras*, whose protagonist rather surprisingly discovers a sea near the pole while the pole itself is an island with

¹⁶⁸ Noble's account is mentioned in *Daily News* 25 June 1863; *Illustrated London News* 4 July 1863, p. 7.

¹⁶⁹ Noble, 1862, p. 213.

¹⁷⁰ Noble, 1862, pp. 129-130.

¹⁷¹ For more on Victorian fairy painting see Maas, et al., 1997.

an erupting volcano.¹⁷² As Spufford notes, in the early 1820s an American named John Cleves Symmes introduced another, still more fantastical theory, proposing that the earth was in fact hollow at the poles.¹⁷³ Although Symmes's hypothesis was not taken seriously in Europe, it nonetheless served as inspiration for Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838), whose protagonist meets his destiny paddling in his canoe near the South Pole.¹⁷⁴

While its unfamiliarity and inaccessibility made the Arctic, especially the North Pole, a good setting for incredible stories, as seen in Verne's novel or Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, occurrences of spectacular phenomena in part or wholly exclusive to the Polar Regions such as iceblink, mirages and northern lights may have added to ideas about the Arctic as supernatural.¹⁷⁵ In his Arctic accounts of 1820 and 1822, Captain William Scoresby for example described sights 'he should not be seeing' – namely, a ship floating upside down in the sky.¹⁷⁶ Added to explorers' accounts of extraordinary phenomena like these, were creative descriptions of icebergs. In 1834, John Ross stated 'Who more has loved to contemplate the icebergs sailing from the Pole before the tide and the gale, floating along the ocean, through calm and through storm, like castles and towers and mountains'.¹⁷⁷ Furthermore, in 1860 Captain Sherard Osborn published a short biography on Franklin, imagining a scene from his fatal expedition:

Now we see them perfectly beset, the vessels secured to the lowest icebergs that can be found: they studiously avoid those lofty masses which, with spires, and domes, and steeples, resemble huge cathedrals of crystal, - for they know that such icebergs are prone to turn over, or break up suddenly, and would infallibly crush any ship that might be near them.¹⁷⁸

These vivid descriptions were at times accompanied by dramatic illustrations. One example is *Boats in a Swell amongst Ice*, which features in Franklin's narrative from

¹⁷² Hayes, 2003, pp. 55-56. Verne, 2005, pp. 306-324.

¹⁷³ Spufford, 1996, pp. 64-74.

¹⁷⁴ Spufford, 1996, p. 75.

¹⁷⁵ See Fulford, 2009.

¹⁷⁶ Fulford, 2009, p. 171.

¹⁷⁷ Ross quoted in Bown, 1998, p. 7.

¹⁷⁸ Osborn, 1860, p. 40.

his Second Overland Expedition (**Fig. 2.37**).¹⁷⁹ Based on an on-the-spot sketch George Back drew of the seashore east of the mouth of the Mackenzie River in far northeast Canada (Northwest and Yukon Territories), the print shows two rowing boats dwarfed by enormous pieces of ice, the fantastical shapes of which seem to defy the laws of gravitation.

Naturally, in an age of science and progress, the British did not actually believe that the Arctic was supernatural and, by 1830, sightings such as Scoresby's could be explained scientifically. What in the past may have been perceived as a mythical place had by 1860 been explained by natural laws and fully submitted to scientific mensuration.¹⁸⁰ While Church's approach embodied these scientific ideals of accurate observation and measurement, the peculiar ways in which art critics responded to his painting suggest that Church's contemporaries did not in fact experience *The Icebergs* as a representation of an actual Arctic landscape.

Edwin Landseer's Man Proposes – God Disposes, 1864

For the Royal Academy's annual exhibition of 1864, Edwin Landseer (1802-1873) contributed the painting *Man Proposes – God Disposes*, showing two polar bears amongst human remnants in an icy landscape (**Fig. 2.38**). Landseer's imposing composition was sure to attract the audience's attention: the polar bears were not only fearsome but placed on a large canvas measuring almost a metre by two metres and a half. Additionally, *Man Proposes – God Disposes* had been hung in a favourable spot in one of the three posts of honour in the East Room, also called the chief room, of the Academy's premises on Trafalgar Square in London.¹⁸¹ Here Landseer's painting was exhibited alongside John Phillip's *A Spanish Wake* and John Frederick Lewis's *The Hósh of the House of the Coptic Patriarch* (**Figs. 2.39**,

¹⁷⁹ Franklin, 1828, p. 170.

¹⁸⁰ Fulford, 2009, pp. 179-184.

¹⁸¹ *Fine Arts Quarterly Review* October 1864, p. 33, *The Art Journal* 1 June 1864, p. 157, *The Saturday Review* 21 May 1864, p. 625. *The Illustrated London News*, *The Reader* and *The Times* also refer to this room as the 'East Room'.

2.40).¹⁸² Displayed in close proximity to Phillip's and Lewis's domestic scenes from the warm and sunny 'south', *Man Proposes – God Disposes* must have offered a startling contrast.

Landseer's sky is dark, the icebergs are green and grey and the pools of water in between them are almost black, making for a bleak atmosphere that corresponds well with the painting's grim motif. Between the two polar bears placed on opposite sides of the composition there is a long piece of wood, probably a mast, ascending from left to right into the picture plane, resting on icebergs on each side. The piece of timber extends over a space sheltered by surrounding icebergs that may have been used as a refuge, and eventual burial site, for one of the unfortunate sailors trapped there. Inside this shelter or grave are remnants of human beings and artefacts comprising bones, two red coloured pieces of fabric, and a blue coloured cloth that could be a coat.¹⁸³ A telescope, metal ring – possibly a sextant eyepiece – and what looks like a book with hinges and a lock lie in the left hand corner and represent two further signs of past human activity. Surrendered to the forces of nature, the dead men have not been left to rest in peace. While one bear is chewing on a piece of bare bone from a human skeleton, the other is forcefully pulling on a red coloured piece of fabric. The horizontal composition of Landseer's painting gives the spectator only a limited view. The two icebergs that mark the outer boundary of vision force the viewer, by obstructing a view to the background, to look at the harrowing incident taking place in the foreground. The viewer is thus directly confronted with the 'reality' of the Arctic.

Landseer never travelled to the Arctic and, although he may have been able to study polar bears at the London Zoo, his scene was completely imagined.¹⁸⁴ Despite the invented scene, Landseer's painting clearly took up a current theme, engaging rather directly with the fate of the Franklin expedition. The reading of *Man Proposes – God*

¹⁸² 'Hósh' translates as 'courtyard'.

¹⁸³ Suggested by *Athenaeum* 7 May 1864, p. 650.

¹⁸⁴ Chapel, 1982, p. 102. The art critic in *The Reader* also commented that Landseer had the opportunity to study polar bears at the 'Regent's Park collection'. *Reader* 7 May 1864, p. 595.

Disposes as a representation of one of the sites where the lost explorers had died was articulated already at the Royal Academy's anniversary banquet held on the opening day of the exhibition, with the press noting that John Forster's speech during the dinner included a toast to Landseer's 'genius' and his 'Grave of Franklin'.¹⁸⁵ Later reviews of the exhibition similarly reveal that Landseer's painting was commonly associated with the Franklin disaster – unsurprising perhaps, given that when Landseer first exhibited his painting at the Royal Academy, only five years had passed since 'conclusive' evidence about the fate of the expedition had been found.¹⁸⁶ As the art critic William Cosmo Monkhouse wrote in 1877, Landseer had seized 'a subject in everybody's thoughts'.¹⁸⁷

Literature Review

A substantial amount of art historical research has been published on Landseer's artistic oeuvre, with the artist generally held to be the most famous and successful of all British animal painters.¹⁸⁸ The bulk of this literature is biographical however, and most works include only brief passages on *Man Proposes – God Disposes* that function to situate this painting in relation to Landseer's artistic development. Exceptions are publications by Richard Ormond and Jeannie Chapel who, in linking *Man Proposes – God Disposes* to the Franklin expedition, have touched on the broader social and cultural dimensions in which the painting emerged. With their

¹⁸⁵ *Standard* 2 May 1864.

¹⁸⁶ Reviews that explicitly mention Franklin include *Athenaeum* 7 May 1864, p. 650; *Art Journal* June 1864, p. 168; *Annual Register* 1865, p. 333; *Reader* 7 May 1864, p. 595; Rossetti, October 1864, p. 27; *Penny Illustrated Paper* 7 May 1864.

¹⁸⁷ Monkhouse, 1877, xi.

¹⁸⁸ Vaughan, (1985) 1998, p. 143. Early works on Landseer include Stephens, 1874; Dafforne, 1873; Monkhouse, 1877; Monkhouse, 1878; Monkhouse, 1881; Loftie, 1891. Two monographs on the artist appeared in the 1970s: Lennie, 1976; Hill, 1973. Landseer's works have been exhibited four times since the 1960s: the Royal Academy in 1961, Mappin Art Gallery in 1972, Tate Gallery and Philadelphia Museum of Art in 1981 and at the National Gallery of Scotland in 2005. See The Royal Academy of Arts, 1961; Hague, 1972; Ormond, 1982; Ormond, 2005. The Royal Holloway University of London, the owner of *Man Proposes – God Disposes*, has produced two catalogues of its art collection that include passages on Landseer's painting, see Chapel, 1982, pp.101-102; Cowling, 2008, p. 187.

factual details, in particular their listings of primary and secondary sources, the separate works by these scholars are helpful tools to the researcher. Yet their brief handling of the painting – in each case, a total of two pages – provides only superficial analyses.¹⁸⁹ As of yet, Arctic scholarship has not produced a fuller treatment of *Man Proposes – God Disposes*. While David usefully draws attention to the painting's relevance to the post-Franklin period and the changing ideas about the Arctic that characterised this phase, he does not go into any detail about its relationship to prevailing discourses or other aspects of the painting.¹⁹⁰ Potter's book, which is illustrated with Landseer's painting on the front cover, gives a more thorough description of the historical, cultural and social context specific to *Man Proposes – God Disposes*, including its display at the Royal Academy in 1864. Although touching on issues of reception, Potter does not analyse the painting in any real detail and, beyond his inclusion of the work in an overall study of Arctic visual displays, Potter's work on *Man Proposes – God Disposes* adds little to what has already been published within art history.¹⁹¹

The Visual and Written Culture of the Franklin Disaster

Landseer seems to have created only one painting of polar bears and the Arctic in his lifetime, the implication being that *Man Proposes – God Disposes* may not have been his idea.¹⁹² Ormond has suggested that the financier Edward J. Coleman, Landseer's patron and the commissioner of *Man Proposes – God Disposes*, may have requested the particular choice of subject as he was personally very interested in Franklin's lost expedition.¹⁹³ At the same time, interest in the Franklin expedition

¹⁸⁹ Ormond, 1982, pp. 207-208; Chapel, 1982, pp. 101-102.

¹⁹⁰ David mentions Landseer's work three times, amounting to a total of six sentences. David, 2000, pp. 30, 164-165, 240.

¹⁹¹ Potter, 2007, pp. 162-167.

¹⁹² Another exception is his sketches of lions for four sculptures around *Nelson's Column* on Trafalgar Square, London.

¹⁹³ Ormond, 1982, pp. 20, 208. In 1881, Thomas Holloway, founder of the Royal Holloway College in 1879, bought the painting on an auction at Christie's in 1881. Today the painting forms part of the Royal Holloway Collection. Chapel, 1982, pp. 13, 101-103.

was not unusual in this period, with several memorials erected in London alone bearing witness to the way in which the tragedy consumed the nation.¹⁹⁴ During the 1850s Franklin and the progress of the search for his lost expedition became an intrinsic part of British culture, as well as an international phenomenon. The press featured constant updates, with the *Illustrated London News* for example publishing twenty illustrated articles as well as countless short notices between 1851 and 1853.¹⁹⁵ A number of other newspapers such as six-pence Saturday paper *The Examiner*, and the penny-weeklies *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* and *The London Journal* paid similarly close attention to progress.¹⁹⁶ Between November 1849 and January 1850, the latter published a series of twelve articles entitled 'The Arctic Expedition', with the introduction to the first article capturing the overall tone of the moment:

The fact that Sir John Franklin and his hardy companions in adventure are in comparative safety, although locked up in "thick-ribbed regions of ice," has strongly directed public attention to the dismal locality which we alone, of all nations, have most perseveringly attempted to explore [...] The last great expedition, it will be recollected, sailed in the spring of 1845, under the command of Sir John Franklin, and since the latter end of that year no news has been received of the adventures [...] From the vague information received, the condition of the ships must be far from favourable to the safety of the hardy mariners.¹⁹⁷

Franklin's expedition and the searches were also a recurrent theme in popular exhibitions. In the early 1850s, at least six Arctic panoramas, dioramas and moving

¹⁹⁴ Prior to the sculpture that now stands in Waterloo Place, but was initially placed in the Athenaeum Gardens in 1864, Parliament raised a memorial in the Painted Hall of Greenwich Hospital. Additionally, Jane Franklin arranged for a bust of her husband to be set in Westminster Abbey in 1874. For other Franklin memorials see Tomlinson, 2007.

¹⁹⁵ Potter, 2007, pp. 71-78, 94-98. Cavell, 2008.

¹⁹⁶ *The Examiner* printed at least thirty-four news articles concerned with the Franklin searches in 1850 alone, while *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* published a minimum of thirty-five that same year.

¹⁹⁷ *London Journal* 3 November 1849, p. 141. Together with a compilation of rewritten extracts from earlier expedition accounts, 'The Arctic Expedition' series presented information about the progress of the searches, reports from the Davis's Strait whalers and speculations about the current situation of the missing explorers.

panoramas were on show in London.¹⁹⁸ Perhaps the most recognised of these was Robert Burford's 1850 *Summer and Winter Views of the Polar Regions* at Leicester Square – a panorama based on Lieutenant W. H. Browne's sketches from the 1848-49 search expedition under Captain James Clark Ross presenting two separate vistas: one summer and one winter view of the search vessels *HMS Investigator* and *Enterprise* in an Arctic landscape.¹⁹⁹

Landseer's Sources of Inspiration

Given the visibility of the Franklin expedition – and the Arctic more broadly – in popular culture at the time, it is clear that Landseer had several visual and written precedents to which he could have looked for inspiration. Whether intentionally or not, it seems likely that the popular exhibitions had a particular impact, perhaps serving as a basis for the painting's theme and composition as well as its large horizontal format. There is however an important difference between Landseer's painting and the Arctic visual displays of the early 1850s. Exhibited at a time when the situation of Franklin's men was still unknown, the panoramas represented scenes from the searches, the places where Franklin's expedition were last seen or, in some cases, well-known episodes from previous expeditions.²⁰⁰ A decade later, Landseer's painting seemed to present the results of the searches, suggesting that his dark and

¹⁹⁸ In 1850: Robert Burford's panorama *Summer and Winter Views of the Polar Regions* and a Mr. Hamilton's 'Moving Panorama of the Arctic Expeditions'. *Illustrated London News* 16 February 1850, p. 114; *Illustrated London News* 23 February 1850, p. 133; *Times* 11 February 1850; *Morning Post* 28 December 1849. In 1851: *Arctic Regions*, termed 'diorama', shown in the Lecture Hall of the Western Literary Institution, Leicester Square; and a Mr. Gomperiz's exhibition, entitled *Panorama of the Arctic Regions*, exhibited in the 'Parthenium Rooms, St. Martin's Lane'. *Illustrated London News* 18 January 1851, p. 46; *Standard* 14 June 1851, p. 3. Potter has found two additional exhibition linked to the Franklin searches: a moving panorama at the Linwood Gallery, Leicester Square, in 1851 and, a diorama put up in Vauxhall Gardens in 1852. Potter, 2007, pp. 92-93.

¹⁹⁹ *Illustrated London News* 9 February 1850, p. 86.

²⁰⁰ *Standard* 14 June 1851.

gloomy representation of the Arctic was – naturally enough – informed by his knowledge of Franklin’s tragic fate.

On the surface, *Man Proposes – God Disposes* gives a similar representation of the Arctic landscape to that painted by Burford, with an image of the panorama’s winter scene in the *Illustrated London News* showing a frozen landscape of snow and ice (**Fig. 2.41**). However, although Burford described this view as ‘one interminable waste, and desolate region of eternal winter [...] whose vast solitude conveys a feeling of total privation and utter desolation’, the landscape was nonetheless crowded by explorers carrying out various activities and large vessels ‘housed in’ by snow walls on their sides and a canvas covering their decks.²⁰¹ Burford also illuminated the sky with scores of stars, a big bright moon and the Northern Lights, which were said to be ‘vividly darting its brilliant coruscations towards the zenith, and tinging [sic] the snow with its pale mellow light’.²⁰² Burford’s panorama thus represented the Arctic as a place that was, if not exactly hospitable, at least manageable in winter. The pamphlet accompanying Burford’s panorama described the ice-bound, snow-covered vessels as ‘most picturesque and beautiful’, concluding that the scene was overall both ‘striking and romantic’.²⁰³ Landseer’s version of the Arctic is decidedly cheerless by comparison.

According to Frederic G. Stephens account from 1874, published just one year after Landseer’s death, *Man Proposes – God Disposes* was inspired by M’Clintock’s discoveries and the remnants his expedition brought back in 1859.²⁰⁴ Adding to John Rae’s finds from 1854, the return of M’Clintock’s expedition brought further remnants, as well as a written document indicating the state of Franklin’s crew and direction they took after abandoning the vessels in 1848 – all of which Landseer would have been able to read about in late September 1859.²⁰⁵ More spectacular still

²⁰¹ Burford, 1850, p. 11.

²⁰² Burford, 1850, p. 4.

²⁰³ Burford, 1850, p. 4.

²⁰⁴ Stephens, 1874, p. 138.

²⁰⁵ *Examiner* 24 September 1859, p. 617; Beattie and Geiger, 2004 (1987), pp. 82-83. *Lloyd’s Weekly Newspaper* 25 September 1859; *Examiner* 24 September 1859; *Morning Chronicle* 23 September 1859; *Daily News* 23 September 1859; *Morning*

however, was the United Service Museum's exhibition of the 'Franklin relics' in late October the same year.²⁰⁶ Comparing these to the objects that appear in the foreground of *Man Proposes – God Disposes*, it seems likely that Landseer found material for his painting here, with the metal ring, book and blue coat all having a direct counterpart in the exhibition, wherein they were labelled with 'all the information that could be obtained or surmised respecting them' and displayed in glass cases alongside other relics (**Figs. 2.42-2.44**).²⁰⁷

Landseer's painting also links to M'Clintock's written description of one of the sites where he found a boat measuring seven by twenty-eight feet in which 'A large quantity of clothing was found [...] and also two skeletons. One of these lay in the after part of the boat, under a pile of clothing; the other, which was much more disturbed, probably by animals, was found in the bow'.²⁰⁸ Due to its close intersection with contemporary events, as well as the particular details of its composition, *Man Proposes – God Disposes* had the appearance of a visual reportage, giving a seemingly realistic representation of one of the actual sites where members of the lost expedition died.²⁰⁹ According to the *Art Journal*, Landseer 'takes the spectator to the terror-striking ice-fields where Franklin and his companions found in death snow for their grave and winding-sheet'.²¹⁰

Post 23 September 1859; *Reynolds's Newspaper* 25 September 1859; *Era* 25 September 1859.

²⁰⁶ *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* 23 October 1859. *Morning Post* 17 October 1859; *Daily News* 17 October 1859.

²⁰⁷ *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* 23 October 1859; *Daily News* 17 October 1859. The scraps of clothing on display were once part of a petty officer's double-breasted jacket or waistcoat found on a skeleton near Cape Herschel on King William Island. Although the telescope in Landseer's painting does not have an actual counterpart in the remnants kept at the National Maritime Museum today, the list of objects published in the *Morning Post*'s article on the United Service Museum's exhibition included 'part of a telescope'. *Morning Post* 17 October 1859.

²⁰⁸ *Examiner* 24 September 1859. Similar descriptions were found in other newspapers, see *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* 25 September 1859.

²⁰⁹ In the early 1860s, London Zoo owned a pair of adult polar bears, which had a cub in 1865. While it is likely that Landseer used these as models, he also borrowed a skull of a polar bear from the palaeontologist Hugh Falconer. Chapel, 1982, p. 102; Ormond, 1982, p. 208.

²¹⁰ *Art Journal* June 1864, p. 168.

Man Proposes – God Disposes and the Problem of Cannibalism

It is not surprising that Landseer's morbid painting did not sit well with the lost explorers' families and friends, in particular Franklin's widow who declared it an 'offensive picture' – although this did not, however, prevent her from entering the other rooms of the Royal Academy.²¹¹ A similar reaction is expressed in some of the reviews. *The Reader* observed that Landseer's painting was commonly described as 'painful' for example, while the *Illustrated London News* argued that 'Extraordinarily original and imaginative as is this picture, it may be questioned whether the representation is not too purely harrowing for the proper function of art'.²¹² Similarly, *The Standard* thought Landseer's 'ingenuity of illustration exceeds good taste'.²¹³ The strongest objections came from *The Era* and *The Athenaeum*. Compared to the long and complimentary descriptions of two of Landseer's smaller contributions to the Royal Academy exhibition — *Piper and Pair of Nutcrackers* (**Fig. 2.45**) and *Windsor Park*, both of which also hung in the East Room – *The Era* offered little comment on Landseer's main work concluding, after a brief description of the painting, that 'The artist has called his work *Man Proposes and God Disposes*, the meaning of which, however, is by no means clear. On the whole, this is a picture which will satisfy few who look on it, and can add nothing to the artist's reputation'.²¹⁴ *The Athenaeum* took a more forceful stance still, announcing that 'As to his choice of subject, we protest against it. – Sir E. Landseer's most pleasant and healthiest picture here is *Piper and Pair of Nutcrackers*'.²¹⁵

Unlike other reviews, the *Athenaeum*'s comment seems directed at Landseer himself. Before his death in 1873, Landseer had been struggling with failing eyesight, depression and alcoholism for several years, most likely causing him to turn down the offer to take up the presidency of the Academy in 1866.²¹⁶ In 1864 three years

²¹¹ McGoogan, 2007 (2006), p. 478.

²¹² *Illustrated London News* 7 May 1864, p. 455. *Reader* 4 June 1864, p. 724.

²¹³ *Standard* 30 April 1864, p. 5.

²¹⁴ *Era* 8 May 1864, p. 9.

²¹⁵ *Athenaeum* 7 May 1864, p. 650.

²¹⁶ Ormond, 1982, pp. 20-21, 201; Hill, 1973, pp. 38-39.

had passed since Landseer had last exhibited at the Royal Academy, and his intention with the startling motif and composition of *Man Proposes – God Disposes* may therefore have been to announce his presence at the exhibition and reaffirm his position as an Academician with force. However, while this approach worked on other art critics – who saw *Man Proposes – God Disposes* as testimony of a powerful comeback – it seems the *Athenaeum* was trying to suggest that the painting was symptomatic of the artist's weak physical and, perhaps more to the point, mental health.²¹⁷

The reason for making such a demeaning comment seems bound up in contemporary debates concerning the Franklin expedition. The editor of *The Athenaeum*, William Hepworth Dixon, was in fact a friend of Jane Franklin and may have been more sensitive to the way in which Landseer represented the lost explorers. Regardless of the reason, Landseer's painting certainly touched on what had been a controversial topic since 1854: the details concerning the final end of Franklin's party. The condemnation of *Man Proposes – God Disposes* promoted by the *Athenaeum* perhaps belies, in other words, a far stronger concern about the potential meanings of Landseer's work.²¹⁸

John Rae's 1854 report to the Admiralty, which was immediately published in *The Times*, revealed that the lost expedition had not only perished after five years, but also that the men 'had been driven to the last resource – cannibalism – as a means of prolonging existence'.²¹⁹ As nine years had passed since the disappearance of Franklin's expedition, it was obviously not Rae's claim that the men had died that was the problem, but his 'shocking' information – received from the Inuit in Pelly

²¹⁷ *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* July 1864, p. 95; Rossetti, July 1864, p. 67.

²¹⁸ McGoogan, 2007 (2006), p. 478.

²¹⁹ At Pelly Bay, Rae had met a group of Inuit who possessed items from the lost expedition. One of the Inuit informed Rae that in the spring four years earlier about forty of Franklin's men had been observed travelling southwards across the ice on the north shore of King William's Island. Through sign language, these white men had communicated to the group of Inuit that 'their ship, or ships, had been crushed by ice'. Later on the same season, the bodies of about thirty white men had been found on the mainland northwest of the Great Fish River and five corpses on a nearby island. *Times* 23 October 1854, pp. 7-8.

Bay – that the ‘gallant’ explorers had eaten their dead companions in order to survive.²²⁰

As has been pointed out by other scholars, it was – from amongst London’s cultural elite – Charles Dickens who perhaps most strongly opposed this ‘allegation’.²²¹ Egged on by Franklin’s widow, Dickens made his opinions publicly known, publishing a couple of fiery articles in his own journal, *Household Words* in 1854. Together with Wilkie Collins, Dickens also created a highly successful play in 1857, entitled *The Frozen Deep*.²²²

Essential to Dickens’s argument against Rae was the assumption that, due their supposed superior character, British naval officers were ‘incapable’ of cannibalism: ‘In weighing the probabilities and improbabilities of the “last resource,” the foremost question is not the nature of the extremity; but, the nature of the men’. He further encouraged people to ‘confide with their [the explorers’] own firmness, in their fortitude, their lofty sense of duty, their courage, and their religion’.²²³ Throughout his articles, Dickens additionally made use of notions regarding the inferiority of the Inuit to discredit their reports of cannibalism among Franklin’s crew. In his first article, Dickens writes for example: ‘the better educated the man, the better disciplined the habits, the more reflective and religious the tone of thought, the more

²²⁰ Beattie and Geiger, 2004 (1987), pp. 45-46. *Times* 1 November 1854, p. 9; *The Times* E.J.H, 3 November 1854, p. 7. *Atlas* 28 October 1854. *Spectator* 28 October 1854, p. 1128; *Athenaeum* 28 October 1854, p. 1305. *Examiner* 28 October 1854; *Morning Post* 28 October 1854; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* 29 October 1854; *Era* 29 October 1854; *Morning Chronicle* "Philanthropus", 16 November 1854.

²²¹ Eber’s collection of Inuit oral history include information about the Inuit’s encounters with members of the Franklin expedition after the explorers had abandoned the vessels. This history include varied descriptions of cannibalism among the starving explorers. Furthermore, in 1997, Dr. Anne Keenleyside’s analysis of skeletal bones found on-site revealed cut-marks consistent with Inuit reports that Franklin’s men had eaten their each other. Eber, 2008, pp. 74-83; Potter, 2007, p. 167.

²²² Dickens, 2 December 1854; Dickens, 9 December 1854; Brannan, 1966, pp. 1-20; McGoogan, 2002 (2001), pp. 220-233; McGoogan, 2007 (2006), pp. 412-414; Potter, 2007, pp. 103-118.

²²³ Dickens, 9 December 1854, pp. 392-393.

gigantically improbable the “last resource” becomes’.²²⁴ His oft-repeated list of ‘proofs’ is no coincidence: in drawing attention to the British explorers’ discipline, education and religion, Dickens was citing some of the most typical traits separating ‘civilised’ and ‘savage’ people.²²⁵ Dickens did not hesitate to articulate clearly the full implications of such a divide. After challenging Rae’s report by pointing out ‘inconsistencies of Esquimaux evidence’ and the high probability of a communication failure between Rae and the Inuit, Dickens comments:

Lastly, no man can, with any show of reason, undertake to affirm that this sad remnant of Franklin’s gallant band were not set upon and slain by the Esquimaux themselves. It is impossible to form an estimate of the character of any race of savages, from their deferential behaviour to the white man while he is strong. The mistake has been made again and again; and the moment the white man has appeared in the new aspect of being weaker than the savage, the savage has changed and sprung upon him [...] We believe every savage to be in his heart covetous, treacherous, and cruel.²²⁶

In *The Frozen Deep* Dickens, at least superficially, left out these racially charged speculations about the Inuit’s role in the explorers’ death. However, the play surely underscores the first part of Dickens’s oratory concerning the ‘unyielding’ nature of English naval officers. The setting for the play’s second act is a hut housing the crew of a miserable expedition whose two ships have been lost and is facing a fourth year in the ‘boundless desolation’ of the Arctic.²²⁷ Here the bitter and ill-tempered officer Richard Wardour gets a golden opportunity to kill his sworn enemy – Frank Aldersley, who ‘stole’ his girlfriend – when the expedition’s commander sends the two men out together to find help.²²⁸ Due to illness and starvation Aldersley is physically weaker than Wardour and in their Arctic location ‘far beyond the track of any previous expedition’, it would be easy for him to leave behind a body that would never be found. Yet Wardour overcomes this ‘trial’ and, instead of succumbing to

²²⁴ Dickens, 2 December 1854, p. 365.

²²⁵ Bolt, 1971, chapters 1 and 6.

²²⁶ Dickens, 2 December 1854, p. 362.

²²⁷ Brannan, 1966, p. 127.

²²⁸ Brannan, 1966, pp. 133-139.

opportunity and temptation, ends up sacrificing his own life in order to save Aldersley's.²²⁹

Like Dickens's articles, *The Frozen Deep* links character and nationality, a point Robert Louis Brannan has made rather clear by documenting the symbols of England that were visible on stage throughout the play.²³⁰ The first act – showing the explorers' women (one a daughter, the other a wife, the third a fiancée) anxiously waiting for news from the expedition – was, according to *The Examiner*, set 'in the pretty drawing-room of a country house, having one of those sweet picturesque views so thoroughly English, with a village church and spire in the distance'.²³¹ After this pleasant view of the 'civilised' and homely countryside, the play changed location to the Arctic wilderness for the second act, of which *The Examiner* wrote, 'We are next shivering in a hut in the Arctic regions, all bare, dreary, and grim. As the door opens and admits the cutting blasts we see the falling snow and the far-spreading frozen waste'.²³² The presence of the British ensign in this scene – and throughout the final act, where it features on the rescuing vessel – clearly functioned for audiences at the time as a powerful symbol of the character and nationality of the naval officers.²³³ As *The Examiner* put it, 'In this scene of desolation there is one warm, vivid, colour, speaking of home and hope. It is the British ensign, blowing out straight and bold in the icy breeze, as much to say, "Where am I not? And where I am aloft, who despairs? who has not heart and hope and resolution?"'.²³⁴

Dickens additionally drew on contemporary thinking about 'savage' peoples to promote ideas about England as a civilised and civilising nation. Although this is perhaps most clear from his use of the Arctic as a physical and mental testing ground uninhabitable for 'civilised' people, it is also apparent in his characters. In contrast to the brave and heroic explorers in the Arctic and their dedicated loyal women back

²²⁹ Brannan, 1966, pp. 157-160.

²³⁰ Brannan, 1966, p. 76.

²³¹ Brannan, 1966, pp. 101-102. *The Examiner* 17 January 1857 quoted in Brannan, 1966, pp. 75-76.

²³² *The Examiner* 17 January 1857 quoted in Brannan, 1966, p. 76.

²³³ Also noted by Brannan, 1966, p. 77.

²³⁴ *The Examiner* 17 January 1857 quoted in Brannan, 1966, p. 76.

home, all of whom are English, the ‘disagreeable’ character of Nurse Esther – the nurse of Aldersley’s fiancée who appears in the first act – is a Highland Scot. Accused of scaring the other servants with her superstitions, Nurse Esther further applies her ‘Second Sight’ to predict what has happened to the expedition.²³⁵ To the great despair of Aldersley’s fiancée, Esther claims that ‘The men are lost, a’ lost; i’ the land of ice and snow. On the land o’ ice and snow they shall never be found again! [...] I see the lamb i’ the grasp o’ the lion. I see your bonnie bird alone wi’ the hawk. I see you and all around you crying bluid!’.²³⁶ As Brannan argues, Dickens’ representation of Esther as uneducated, superstitious and unmannered, probably mirrored the author’s own opinion of the ‘savage’ Scottish Highlanders.²³⁷ Additionally, Dickens may have had the Inuit and even Rae in mind when writing this part. Like the nurse, Rae was from Scotland (Orkney), and the way her ‘Second Sight’ is represented – in the end proving to be nothing more than ‘barbarous nonsense’ – is close to how Dickens felt about Rae’s report and the Inuit’s testimonies. At the very least, his representation and positioning of the ‘mean’ superstitious Highland nurse against the ‘good’ Christian English women and stoic English men suggested that knowledge of the innate character of Englishmen was a stronger proof than the word of ‘uncivilised’ people.

Seven years after Dickens’s play, Landseer brought the fate of the Franklin expedition to the public’s attention once again. Although addressing the same issue, their works seem to suggest very different ideas. In line with the articles he published in *Household Words*, Dickens’s *The Frozen Deep* reassures the spectator that the ‘nature’ of British explorers and naval officers – ‘their lofty sense of duty, their courage, and their religion’ – will conquer any trial or temptation. Dickens’s play can thus be seen to stand as certain testimony to the innocence of Franklin’s crew, particularly concerning the thorny issue of cannibalism. By contrast, Landseer’s harrowing painting of the British explorers’ death seems somewhat less convinced about the supposed moral superiority possessed by all Englishmen. Instead of a reassuring gravestone or cross, for example, the suggestion made by Landseer’s

²³⁵ Brannan, 1966, p. 104.

²³⁶ Brannan, 1966, pp. 115-116.

²³⁷ Brannan, 1966, p. 37.

painting of bodies being torn apart by ferocious carnivores potentially led to speculation about how the men had in fact passed their final days. Considering that Franklin's fate was a rather sensitive issue, it may have been difficult for contemporary viewers to disassociate Landseer's scene from Rae's reports on cannibalism.

Man Proposes – God Disposes as Noble Commemoration

There is another thread to follow however in the reviews of Landseer's painting – and the Royal Academy's 1864 exhibition overall. Closer inspection reveals for example that the policies of hanging governing the organisation of the paintings on the Academy's walls were of great concern and importance to artists and public alike.²³⁸ As is obvious from an illustration of the Academy's 1859 exhibition published in *The London Journal*, if a painting was hung in a bad spot this did not only mean that it was hard to view, it was also less likely to be mentioned in reviews or bought by collectors (**Fig. 2.46**).²³⁹ Naturally, an artist's degree of influence played a great part in the decision-making, with Academy members typically being favoured. While just about any work by an Academician was readily accepted for display, artists outside the institution submitted their contributions to the Academy's governing council, which would select and reject works.²⁴⁰ The resulting display was not only dependent on the quality of the works, then, but more often on an individual artist's position and influence within the Academy. It was no coincidence that works by Phillip, Lewis and Landseer occupied the three posts of honour in the most prestigious room of the exhibition; all were full members of the Academy, with the most important spaces usually given to senior Academicians.²⁴¹ Art critics, in turn,

²³⁸ Sunderland and Solkin, 2001. *Spectator* 14 May 1864, pp. 564-565.

²³⁹ *Spectator* 25 June 1864, p. 737; *Reader* 7 May 1864, p. 595.

²⁴⁰ Sunderland and Solkin, 2001, p. 23. *Reader* 7 May 1864, p. 595.

²⁴¹ Sunderland and Solkin, 2001, p. 25. Landseer was elected a full Royal Academician in 1831, Phillip in 1860 and Lewis in 1864. Irwin, 2007-2010; Bronkhurst and Ormond, 2004-2010; Bendiner, 2004-2010. Although *The Art Journal* argued that there existed three posts of honour and that Phillip, Landseer and Lewis's works occupied these spaces on equal terms, it becomes clear from other

often reinforced the Academy's policy of assessment in their reviews, with the order in which works were presented commonly patterned after the way in which they were hung, thus indicating to the reader which paintings were more important.²⁴²

With Landseer being at the top of the Academy's hierarchical system it is not surprising that, despite a few voices of hesitation and objection, his *Man Proposes – God Disposes* was a great success. It was not only the highest selling painting; according to summaries published in *The Fine Arts Quarterly Review* and *The Annual Register* after the exhibition, Landseer's painting had apparently been the most 'popular' work on display.²⁴³ While *The Spectator* argued that animal painting

reviews that the space where Lewis's painting hung was more prestigious than the other two. This fact caused art critics to comment upon the committee's correctness or incorrectness of placing Lewis's painting on this spot. The art critic in *The Reader*, for example, argued that Lewis had rightly been given the place of honour while *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* wrote that the post in the large room had 'by an error in judgement' been assigned to his painting. Furthermore, in *The Saturday Review* and *The Spectator* Lewis's painting is mentioned in relation to *Man Proposes – God Disposes*. *The Saturday Review* wrote that, 'The place of honour in the chief room might, indeed have been justly claimed by Landseer's extraordinary Arctic scene [...] This apart, we think it has been fitly assigned to the most important work which, since his "English Travellers at Sinai," Mr. Lewis has exhibited'. *The Spectator's* art critic was of the opposite opinion. After a long critique of the committee's decision to place Lewis's 'flat' composition in the post of honour, 'V' commented that it was 'a relief to turn from this misdirected labour to such a work as Sir E. Landseer's great picture'. Whether it was intended or not, the committee's organisation of the paintings set up a dialogue between Lewis's and Landseer's works. *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* July 1864, p. 90; *Reader* 14 May 1864, p. 628; *Spectator* 14 May 1864, p. 564; *Saturday Review* 21 May 1864, p. 625.

²⁴² *Standard* 30 April 1864, p. 5; *Art Journal* June 1864, p. 157; *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* July 1864, pp. 85-95; *Illustrated London News* 7 May 1864, pp. 454-455; *Reader* 14 May 1864, p. 628; *Reader* 7 May 1864, p. 595; *Spectator* 14 May 1864, pp. 564-565; *Era* 8 May 1864, p. 9. Not all critics did this, and there were of course some dissenting voices such as 'V' in *The Spectator*: 'No matter how bad their pictures, it is their right to have them admitted, and to occupy the best places. How bad they can be this exhibition furnishes very full evidence'. *Spectator* 25 June 1864, p. 737.

²⁴³ Rossetti, October 1864, p. 33. Coleman bought Landseer's painting for £3,500, although according to Jeannie Chapel, it was for £2,415. Chapel, 1982, p. 101. *Annual Register* 1865, p. 333; Rossetti, October 1864, p. 27.

had never been ‘turned to so noble account’, *Reynolds’s Newspaper* described the work as ‘a most originally conceived and wonderfully painted picture’.²⁴⁴

The painting’s success with the general public was likely connected to a combination of its somewhat sensationalist presentation, startling contrast to Lewis’s and Phillip’s southern scenes and link to a theme that was very current at the time. While these circumstances account for much of the painting’s popularity, to the ‘serious’ art critics Landseer’s painting could also be defended and praised aesthetically.²⁴⁵

Reviews congratulated Landseer in particular for his ‘unsentimental’ and ‘moral’ representation, raising questions about the specific aesthetic criteria applied to *Man Proposes – God Disposes* on the occasion of its original display in London.

Reviews in *The Art Journal*, *Fraser’s Magazine* and *Blackwood Edinburgh’s Magazine* reveal a general distaste of paintings that were seen to be too sentimental. This is particularly recognisable in reviews of the 1864 Royal Academy Exhibition written by William M. Rossetti for *Fraser’s Magazine* and *Fine Arts Quarterly Review*, in which he noticed ‘with distrust the growing prevalence of subjects of “high moral bearing,” in which the artist seems to pose himself as a man capable of “entering into the deepest feelings of our nature”’.²⁴⁶ As an example of this type of work, Rossetti lists Marcus Stone’s *Working and Shirking*, showing a rural scene, where two soldiers have arrested a deserter (**Fig. 2.47**).²⁴⁷ The poor look of the deserter, his hunched shoulders, gloomy and broad face, untidy dress and cuffed

²⁴⁴ *Reynolds’s Newspaper* 8 May 1864; *Spectator* 14 May 1864, p. 564. High opinions of Landseer’s painting were not confined to a specific class. Expensive specialised periodicals, including *The Saturday Review*, *The Spectator*, *The Art Journal* and *Fraser’s Magazine*, as well the lower middle and working class weeklies *Reynolds’s Newspaper* and *The Penny Illustrated Paper*, warmly received *Man Proposes – God Disposes*. *Saturday Review* 4 June 1864, p. 689; *Saturday Review* 14 May 1864, p. 592; *Spectator* 14 May 1864, p. 564; Rossetti, July 1864, p. 67. *Penny Illustrated Paper* 7 May 1864; *Reynolds’s Newspaper* 8 May 1864.

²⁴⁵ In *The Saturday Review*, *The Spectator* and *The Reader*, reviews of the exhibition were published as a serial – one article each week over a five-week period. In *The Fine Arts Quarterly Review* and the monthlies *The Art Journal* and *Fraser’s Magazine*, the reviews were published as one long article.

²⁴⁶ Rossetti, July 1864, p. 60.

²⁴⁷ Interpretation suggested in *Annual Register* 1865, p. 333.

hands, contrasts with the stoical appearance of the uniformed soldier next to him. The disgracefulness of his actions – namely, ‘shirking’ away from the army, perhaps to be with the woman standing behind – is further emphasised by the other people in the scene (some lumberjacks and a family). Although Rossetti provides little comment on this work, it seems that he objected most to its sentimental representation and overtly moralistic message, being especially displeased with the painting’s added title, ‘England expects every man will do his duty – Masthead of the Victory’, which he found ‘pretentious’.²⁴⁸ By contrast, Rossetti held Alphonse Legros’s *Ex Voto*, representing a group of women kneeling at a crucifix in the woods, in high esteem (**Fig. 2.48**). Praising the artist’s exercise in restraint, Rossetti argued that Legros gave a ‘perfect emotional treatment of the subject’:

They are not in “an agony of grief,” for the sharp wound has had time to heal over; but are most perfectly in earnest in their simple ceremonies. Their human affection is deep *enough* to lead them to the grave – their religious feeling deep enough to bring their knees to the ground, and their prayers to their lips; both as the spontaneous and in-omissible things in the world. The depth of expression is exactly right in proportion; it is as quiet as the act of the women, taken individually; and yet it indicates and involves a sense of human sorrow as profound as those great universal instincts of our nature which underlie all such acts, and whose profundity is declared in the very fact that the acts have become ordinary and of course.²⁴⁹

Neither Rossetti nor other art critics writing for the likes of *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* and *The Art Journal* gave such clear aesthetic grounds for their similarly high appraisals of *Man Proposes – God Disposes*, commenting rather on the ways in which Landseer’s presentation of a theme highly meaningful to contemporary society had touched them more than the other paintings on display. Rossetti admired its noble theme – in his words ‘the mournful and yet glorious human interest of the Arctic expeditions’ – while *The Art Journal* and *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* were impressed by its ‘terror’, ‘pathos’, ‘beauty’ and ‘poetry’.²⁵⁰ Although their reviews do not explain why, beyond subject matter, they approved of Landseer’s painting, Rossetti’s praise of Landseer’s ‘lofty suggestiveness’ and *Blackwood’s*

²⁴⁸ Rossetti, July 1864, p. 60.

²⁴⁹ Rossetti, July 1864, p. 67.

²⁵⁰ Rossetti, July 1864, p. 67; *Art Journal* June 1864, p. 168; *Blackwood’s Edinburgh Magazine* July 1864, p. 95.

Edinburgh Magazine's description of the work as 'an art too subtle for analysis', may suggest that the critics appreciated the way in which Landseer, like Legros, may have 'held back'.²⁵¹ They may well have agreed with a more transparent analysis published in *The Saturday Review*, which argued that Landseer had represented the failed expedition with a 'sublimity of sentiment':

True, this is indeed one aspect of the terror of death – one which almost touches on the horrible. From a too powerful sense of this the artist has saved his work, in part by the total freedom from sentimentalism; but most, perhaps, by the skill with which the idea of the actual human suffering has been removed from the blanched bones and relics, obviously exposed to many Arctic winters.²⁵²

The author of this review clearly thought that Landseer was holding back or representing Franklin's fate with as little emotion and violence as the motif allowed. Instead of bodies there were bones and a red piece of fabric that – although it might of course be interpreted as a metaphor for human flesh – served to put further distance between Landseer's painting and ideas of violence through its association to the 'red union jack'.²⁵³ Similar to the stage set for Dickens's play in 1857, Landseer may have included the red-coloured material in order to stress British values. The 'blanched' bones and artefacts were further seen as indicating a time lapse, and this distancing from the tragedy made the scene less shocking. Landseer's unsentimental representation thus arguably elevated his scene from being a vulgar, populist or sensationalist account of Franklin's ill-fated expedition to a painting filled with 'poetry' and 'beauty'. Although the painting certainly brought to mind the hardships suffered by the dead explorers, such references were understated.

Landseer's dignified representation of a noble topic also made it a moral painting, with 'the ethics of Art' being of clear importance to serious art critics such as Rossetti and his like writing for *The Art Journal* and *The Reader*, all of which revealed great displeasure at Adolph Tidemand's *An Old Norwegian Duel* (**Fig.**

²⁵¹ Rossetti, October 1864, p. 28; *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* July 1864, p. 95.

²⁵² *Saturday Review* 4 June 1864, p. 689.

²⁵³ *Art Journal* June 1864, p. 168; *Times* 30 April 1864, p. 14. The Navy used the red ensign on Arctic expedition vessels.

2.49).²⁵⁴ According to Rossetti, Tidemand's representation of a deadly fight in a crowded farm house fit in the category of 'low art', meaning works that were 'popular with an order of visitors whose admiration carries little or no weight'.²⁵⁵ The reason for such harsh reviews was the theme of the painting, with an attack on 'common' descriptions of Tidemand's painting as a 'domestic idyll' published in *The Reader* noting:

The subject in itself is hideous and revolting – a drinking bout interrupted by a quarrel, leading to a bloody encounter between two peasants, who, in accordance with the savage custom of a barbarous time and race, hack each other to death with axes in the presence of men, women, and children [...] No treatment, however, can entirely redeem the subject from its inherent brutality; and [...] we are not sorry to turn from it to seek for something more noble and lovely, if we may find it.²⁵⁶

On a similar note, *The Art Journal* argued that one of the 'ethics' for domestic genre paintings was that the motif should be 'permissible to ears polite' and 'within permitted social limits' – a criterion Tidemand had failed to fulfil due to 'an error in the choice of subject'.²⁵⁷ Consequently, his 'repulsive' painting showed 'what we in England should deem nothing else than a tavern broil'.²⁵⁸ Unlike Tidemand's painting, there was apparently nothing sinful about *Man Proposes – God Disposes*. In addition to a noble motif, the painting provided a moral lesson. While the proverb presented in the title already served as a warning against man's hubris, the painting functioned rather like a classic tragedy, suggesting that the struggle and heroic downfall of Franklin's men had been inevitable. The painting is a cruel theatre of morality, where the failure of hubris is emphasised. The viewer sees hints of materials such as canvas and wood that could have been used for shelter, but these materials are no longer attainable because two ferocious polar bears are tearing them apart. Worse than not having anything, we see the only means of survival being ripped away. The morality of Landseer's painting thus borders on a horrific lesson.

²⁵⁴ *Art Journal* June 1864, p. 163. Rossetti, October 1864, p. 29; *Reader* 4 June 1864, p. 724.

²⁵⁵ Rossetti, October 1864, p. 29.

²⁵⁶ *Reader* 4 June 1864, p. 724.

²⁵⁷ *Art Journal* June 1864, p. 163.

²⁵⁸ *Art Journal* June 1864, p. 165.

Very cruelly, the painting states that despite any efforts – acts of bravery and cleverness – man cannot challenge God. In a review published in *The Reader*, *Man Proposes – God Disposes* was set up as the moral opposite to Tidemand's painting:

Landseer's choice of subject [...] is a noble one; the subject itself, highly poetical, full of pathos – suggestive of the battle waged by human effort with the unrelenting powers of nature [...] of the true 'excelsior' spirit of which those bones bear witness, which might well be spared to the bears; above all, perhaps, attractive from the sense of mystery pervading the whole scene before us, and which raises the picture to the dignity of a poem.²⁵⁹

This analysis of Landseer's painting recalled contemporary texts on the Franklin expedition, such as M'Clintock's reports and narrative of the search expedition in 1856-59.²⁶⁰ In one of the last chapters of his narrative, M'Clintock writes of Franklin's crew:

There is something deeply touching in their extreme simplicity, and the show in the strongest manner that both the leaders of this retreating party were actuated by the loftiest sense of duty, and met with calmness and decision the fearful alternative of a last bold struggle for life, rather than perish without effort on board their ships²⁶¹

According to *The Reader*, Landseer had represented the expedition in much the same way, with the painting expressing the great splendour and strength of the men in their last heroic struggle against an invincible nature.

Views on Imperialism

Perhaps partial to Landseer's high standing at the Royal Academy and guided by the placement of his painting, the majority of art critics ignored the violence and open-ended meaning of his representation by pointing to ethics and aesthetics of art. To them, Landseer's painting offered an acceptable ending to Franklin's fate. In the emotionally restrained painting the only man-eating carnivores were two polar bears.

²⁵⁹ *Reader* 4 June 1864, p. 724.

²⁶⁰ M'Clintock quoted in *Examiner* 24 September 1859; *Era* 25 September 1859. M'Clintock, 1881 (1859).

²⁶¹ M'Clintock, 1881 (1859), p. 247.

Furthermore, the implements in the painting's left-hand corner did not imply human violence. Instead of tools that would have been more useful to survival, such as a gun, knife, tinderbox or, indeed, an ice hatchet and cooking pot, Landseer's representation of a telescope, notebook and sextant eyepiece could be compared to the 'calmness' and 'sense of duty' M'Clintock thought characterised the explorers. Unlike Lady Franklin, who was probably reminded of Rae's report upon viewing the painting, it seems the art critics in favour of the painting thought it testified to M'Clintock's 're-discovery' of Franklin's fate – that the men had stayed 'civilised' and 'English' until the end.

In contrast to Lady Franklin, *The Athenaeum* and *The Era*, most art critics placed Landseer's representation within, instead of outside, the current discourse on Franklin, which also included Dickens's *The Frozen Deep*. The painting's place within this 'heroic' discourse was certainly assured by an art critic writing for *The Saturday Review*, who interpreted *Man Proposes – God Disposes* as a commemoration to Franklin and his crew; the dead explorers' 'bones and relics' were things 'which have been, and may be again', with Landseer's representation of them having 'honoured' their memory.²⁶²

However, while *Man Proposes – God Disposes* may have absolved Franklin from accusations of cannibalism and elevated him to a hero or martyr in public consciousness, Landseer's gloomy representation certainly seems to have questioned the point of Britain's engagement in the Arctic.²⁶³ This potential imperial aspect of *Man Proposes – God Disposes* seems all the more poignant considering that one of its pendants in the Royal Academy Exhibition was Lewis's painting of Egypt, which presented a rather striking contrast to Landseer's work. Like Phillip's *Spanish Wake*, Lewis's painting exhibits the bright light, clear colours and heat of the 'south', the courtyard abounding with life and vegetation. Amidst the variety of human and animal life, however, a social hierarchy keeps intact feelings of safety and order. In the foreground Lewis portrays a life of play and ease, where two children are feeding

²⁶² *Saturday Review* 4 June 1864, p. 689.

²⁶³ *Daily News* 17 October 1859. Emphasis added.

animals and an old man is relaxing in the shade. By contrast, the figures in the back are all involved in the business of the day. The top man, the patriarch, is dictating a letter to his secretary while men of various positions and roles encircle him; two Bedouin messengers with their camels stand to the left while a servant stands by to the right. In addition to clear visual contrasts between Landseer's and Lewis's works, the paintings are of course connected through their associations to empire; like the Arctic, Egypt represented a part of the world where British commercial and political interests became increasingly influential during the nineteenth century.²⁶⁴

Yet, the contrasting representations of 'North' and 'South' found in Landseer's and Lewis's paintings suggests that their visual constructions of the East and the Arctic served different social and political functions. The acknowledgment of western influence is for example handled rather differently. Although painting a scene from present-day Egypt – most likely, his own courtyard – Lewis excluded all signs of a European presence, which is common for 'Orientalist' paintings of the time. While Western artists tended to pay close attention to the strong colours and bright light of the East, as well as details of architecture, dress and the physical appearance of people and things 'Oriental', they usually avoided hints of or edited out altogether foreign influences and modernisation.²⁶⁵ In Lewis's *The Hósh of the House of the Coptic Patriarch*, this notion of the 'untouched' 'Orient' adds to the 'alluring' quality of the scene.²⁶⁶ At the same time, Lewis's 'Orient' is – despite its removal of European references – perhaps more characterised by familiarity than 'otherness'. In

²⁶⁴ In *Colonising Egypt*, Timothy Mitchell goes through the modernisation and westernisation that Egypt underwent since the latter part of the eighteenth century, after becoming a part of Europe's global textile industry. Superficially, these changes provided Egypt with a new infrastructure, including a network of roads, telegraphs, railways and ports in addition to a rebuilding of towns and cities. However, in addition to an influx of European advisors, engineers, fortune seekers and tourists, these changes radically transformed Egyptian society. Together with the new infrastructure, Egypt's government introduced a new organisation of the army and the school and reconstructed housing. These inventions all resembled European practices or principles devised in European colonies. Moreover, the transformation and westernisation of Egypt's society answered Europe's request for a structure and discipline that best suited modern capitalist production and exchange. Mitchell, 1991 (1988), pp. 14-17, 21, 34-46, 174-175, 179.

²⁶⁵ For a critique of Orientalist painting see Nochlin, 1991 (1989).

²⁶⁶ Rossetti describes Lewis's painting as 'alluring'. Rossetti, July 1864, p. 69.

addition to obvious similarities in architecture, vegetation and animal life, the ordered social structure of the patriarch's household pictured in Lewis's painting effectively reconstituted British nineteenth-century society.

Compared with Lewis's painting, Britain's presence and imperial ambitions in foreign territories are more openly displayed in Landseer's *Man Proposes – God Disposes*. In an inverse move to Lewis's painting, Landseer excluded any sign of a native presence in the Arctic, although he would certainly have been aware of the fact that the Inuit inhabited the very same landscape in which Franklin and his men had perished. After all, Rae's report of 1854, which represented the first useful and reliable traces to the location of the lost expedition, was based on information he had received from the Inuit.²⁶⁷ Additionally, Inuit had worked as guides for M'Clintock's expedition and several of the 'Franklin relics' exhibited in the United Service Museum in 1859 were objects M'Clintock had reclaimed from the Inuit during his search. The reason Landseer may have excluded the Inuit was perhaps because signs of their presence might have challenged the general idea communicated by his painting that life in this desolate place of eternal winter was impossible. In Landseer's painting, the Arctic is represented as an uninhabited and uninhabitable frontier where the barren threatening landscape reflects the very masculine nature of Britain's activities there. The only stories belonging to this 'Arctic' in other words, were ones about the physical and psychological trials of exploration and the hardships and deprivations of brave white men.

In this way, Landseer's and Lewis's contrasting scenes seem to reflect some of the distinct functions that the East and the Arctic had within Britain's imperial policy at large. Fulfilling contemporary notions about the alluring and untouched – yet structured and legible to a European – life in the East, Lewis's painting appears to extend an invitation to travel and settlement. The Arctic on the other hand was, after centuries of exploration, still unsettled, largely unknown, unconquerable and uncontrollable – and thus had to be defined differently. In such contexts, *Man*

²⁶⁷ 'I met with Esquimaux in Pelly Bay, from one of whom I learnt that a party of "white men" (Kabloonans) had perished from want of food some distance to the westward', Rae quoted in *Times* 23 October 1854.

Proposes – God Disposes seems to have nourished this national and imperial ‘need’ to define the Arctic as the opposite of a hospitable place, making it obvious why Franklin’s expedition, like all preceding attempts to sail the Northwest Passage, had failed.

Friedrich, Church and Landseer: A Unified View of the Arctic?

Taken together, this chapter’s analysis of Friedrich’s, Church’s and Landseer’s Arctic landscapes reveals that the Arctic was not, in the realm of high-art painting, represented in a unified way in the period connected to Britain’s search for a Northwest Passage between 1818 and 1859. As the three case studies have shown, each painting was entangled in the workings of distinct social, aesthetic and political dimensions, demonstrating that visual similarities – in this case frozen landscapes of disaster – do not necessarily equate to homogeneous modes of thinking. This chapter’s treatment of *Das Eismeer*, *The Icebergs* and *Man Proposes – God Disposes* instead points to the fact that discourses on the Arctic and exploration, both in Britain and beyond, were different following the Franklin trauma around mid century from what they had been in the early 1820s.

Friedrich exhibited his painting in a climate of overall optimism and self-belief, and his pessimistic scene of death and disaster seems to have gone against – as suggested by the negative response his work provoked – dominant notions held in Europe at the time about modern man’s invincibility.²⁶⁸ Thus, although Landseer represented the Arctic in much the same way as Friedrich had, their sublime scenes – separated by just forty years – are by no means synonymous when located in their respective historical frameworks. By the time *Man Proposes – God Disposes* was exhibited in London, several years had passed since Britain had put to rest its search for a Northwest Passage and Landseer’s representation of the Arctic as an undesirable and unliveable place complied with – and to some extent perhaps even legitimised – the

²⁶⁸ Chaplin, 2008.

change in thinking prompted by Franklin's disappearance. To be sure, both *Das Eismeer* and *Man Proposes – God Disposes* represent an empty, hostile and uninhabitable death trap, but whereas Landseer underscored and augmented popular perceptions of the Arctic, Friedrich had worked somewhat against the grain.

Friedrich was not alone in challenging dominant perceptions of the Arctic, however. If *Das Eismeer* succeeded in using the Arctic to criticise European pride and arrogance, *The Icebergs* arguably proposed an entirely different idea about the Arctic itself. While Church's painting is far more conventional in its composition and, more precisely, use of the picturesque than either Friedrich's or Landseer's works, it was he who most surprised his audiences by confronting them with a vibrantly colourful scene of the Arctic that defied all expectations. At the same time and despite its claims to authenticity and scientific grounding *The Icebergs* was ultimately, like Friedrich's and Landseer's paintings, an invented landscape that stereotyped the Arctic, regardless of Church's bold use of colour, as empty and barren. Yet artistic invention served somewhat different ends, with the focus on emptiness – like choices of palette and composition – conveying mixed if not opposing messages.

Landseer rendered the very idea of succeeding in the Arctic, much less living there, entirely unthinkable for a British public, using an imagined, hostile and forbidding landscape to drive this point home. By contrast, Church's icy wilderness is, as demonstrated by the way in which art critics openly associated his scene with a fairyland inhabited by fantastical female creatures, strangely inviting. Given the impact of the Franklin disaster on visual culture and thinking about the Arctic in Britain at mid century, Church's painting is – even with the shipwreck he seems to have knowingly added to his composition – all the more surprising in its pleasing and almost disarming calmness. This suggests that the personal experience of 'other' places can have a significant influence on representation, and that artists – like other producers of culture – are not necessarily constrained by the prevailing discourses of their time, but can in some circumstances perceive, record and even disseminate alternative points of view.

Church's direct encounter with the Arctic made him rather unique for his time, not only amongst professional artists but within all of nineteenth-century society. Beyond the explorers, whalers and Hudson's Bay Company men who had the opportunity to go to the Arctic, and were of course themselves a minority in Britain, Church was one of the only people with first-hand knowledge of the region – although his 'Arctic' was of course geographically different from that of the explorer. Regardless of this difference, it remains the case that the majority of the individuals making up this small group in society did not represent the Arctic, whether in texts or in images. While some of the men involved in exploration, whaling, surveying, trade and trapping did produce textual accounts, including personal letters, diaries, memoirs, expedition narratives, reports and newspaper and journal articles, a far more limited number were involved in actually visualising Arctic landscapes and peoples.

Shifting notions of proximity from the realm of high-art painting to explorer imagery, the next chapter considers a range of other dynamics that were at play in early to mid nineteenth-century understandings of the Arctic. In analysing the diverse visual material that emerged from John Ross's Second Voyage, the following chapter sets up a juxtaposition between the ways in which professional artists 'imagined' the Arctic in the 1820s and 1860s and the 'images' and 'imaginings' of this region produced by an amateur in the 1830s. The terms of production are of course very different – Ross did not simply visit the Arctic as Church did, he spent extended periods of time there. One result of this difference is, perhaps unsurprisingly, a sort of zooming in to the landscape, with the barren icescapes of *Das Eismeer*, *The Icebergs* and *Man Proposes – God Disposes* being in a sense filled in with representations of animals and people, including the clothing, tools, daily activities and living quarters of both Inuit and explorers.

Studying the visual material resulting from Ross's Second Voyage links to the analysis of Friedrich's, Church's and Landseer's paintings in a number of ways. It continues the examination of the influence that existing genres had on Arctic imagery, for example, as well as interactions between representations of the Arctic

and the emergent sciences of the early and mid nineteenth century. Overlaps between exploration and popular culture, briefly touched upon in this chapter, also come more visibly into focus now, as do the various processes of transformation that converted field drawings into other media. Relationships between text and image and the function of illustrations within expedition narratives are also explored. Finally, in something of an inverse of the elaborate and highly polished expressions of artistic imagination witnessed in Friedrich's, Church's and Landseer's work, the next chapter deals with problems of legibility and interpretation, questioning the degree to which notions of discourse might be supported or negated in analyses of both lost sources and 'bad art'. With *Das Eismeer*, *The Icebergs* and *Man Proposes – God Disposes* having set the scene by introducing stereotypes about the Arctic landscape, the following chapter goes on to examine – in the contexts of a single expedition and its immediate aftermath – the confluence of personal motive and emerging racial science in the construction of limiting conceptions of Inuit as 'savages'.

Chapter 3: Exploration Imagery

Examining the genre of exploration imagery, this chapter approaches the thesis's key question of whether there existed a unified view of the Arctic during Britain's high point of engagement in the region by analysing the visual material resulting from Captain John Ross's (1777-1856) Second Voyage to find a Northwest Passage (1829-1833). In focusing on this particular expedition, which was conducted outside the authority of the Admiralty and funded privately by the wealthy gin magnet and former Sheriff of London, Felix Booth, the chapter takes as its overall concern the ways in which Arctic exploration intersected with both popular urban culture and emergent scientific thinking in Britain during the first half of the nineteenth century. Looking at the manner in which Ross's field drawings of the Arctic were later used as source material for and re-presented in both popular exhibitions and illustrations for his two-volume expedition account, the chapter seeks to uncover the material and conceptual transformations Ross's 'images' may have undergone following his return to Britain.

Ross's Second Voyage makes for an intriguing object of study because, in addition to its uncharacteristic independence from the Admiralty, it was the first British expedition to encounter the Netsilik Inuit and then, through a range of media based on Ross's field drawings, represent them to European audiences. The resulting images can be separated into two broad categories. The first, which applies to the imagery featured in the popular exhibitions and Ross's *Narrative*, primarily show scenes connected to the events and storyline of the expedition, serving to entertain and highlight the key activities and discoveries of the voyage. The second category

of imagery, which covers the illustrations of Inuit published in Ross's *Appendix*, shows individuals or groups of Inuit rendered in a style that clearly recalls the ethnographic convention. Accompanied by short biographies and prefaced by a lengthy ethnographic description, these illustrations were by contrast published alongside chapters entitled 'Natural History', 'Geology', the 'Aurora Borealis', 'Terrestrial Refraction', 'Analysis of Fluids' and 'Meteorological Tables', and like these intended for scientific use.

Establishing the contexts in which all this imagery occurred, the chapter starts with a concise chronology of Ross's Second Voyage, opening on to an account of the various visual outputs that resulted from the expedition and the social-political background of Ross's venture overall. Serving to situate Ross and his Second Voyage in the contexts of nineteenth-century Arctic exploration and its intersection with society, this account is followed by a brief literature review of the work of some other scholars to have previously written on Ross's popular exhibitions, *Narrative* and *Appendix*. The chapter is then divided into three case studies that present and discuss the re-presentations of Ross's original field drawings in the order in which they were released to a British public between January 1834 and October 1835. Starting with the popular exhibitions before moving on to the illustrations featured in Ross's *Narrative* and, finally, the *Appendix*, these three case studies together examine how Ross may have contributed to current thinking about Arctic exploration and Inuit in particular. In treating the potential changes in meaning that may have taken place between field drawings and their reproductions, as well as between written accounts and their visualisations, the chapter engages by default with the intrinsic issues of readability posed by the study of amateur art and ephemeral visual sources – namely, the degree of interpretation that is possible when analysing images of relatively poor quality or, alternately, when working with surviving textual descriptions of lost images. Keeping such problems of legibility in mind, the three case studies jointly seek to establish the various personal and professional motives that seem to have been at play as Ross conceived, produced and managed his version of the Arctic. At the same time, representational traditions dating back to earlier periods of exploration, as well as Ross's first-hand experience of the Arctic, almost

certainly came to impact his visualisation of the region and its peoples. The result is a series of ‘images’ and ‘imaginings’ that, like the texts he published from his Second Voyage, were fraught with internal contradictions and ambiguities.

The first case study attempts an analysis of lost sources and their related ephemera, discussing the ideas Ross’s popular exhibitions may have communicated to the public about exploration and, more specifically, himself and his expedition’s contact with the Inuit. To this end, the case study draws on – in addition to Ross’s original field drawings when found – surviving pamphlets, advertisements and newspaper article descriptions to reconstruct the three popular exhibitions Ross separately staged in London in the months immediately following his return from the Arctic. While they carried a secondary educational agenda, the popular exhibitions in which Ross was involved appear to have been most concerned with providing experience and entertainment to a wide urban demographic. The analysis reveals a repeating selection of imagery, suggesting the underlying workings of a narrative in which Ross was scripted as the heroic protagonist of a dramatic adventure story that, in turn, sought to recover his failed Second Voyage as a success. In this context, the Inuit take on a somewhat ambiguous role. Included in Ross’s popular displays, their presence acknowledges the contributions they certainly made to exploration. At the same time, in what appears to have been a move to underscore Ross’s prowess as a leader and Arctic explorer, Ross’s representation of Inuit seem, somewhat contradictorily, to stereotype them as ‘children’.

Through comparisons with earlier examples of exploration imagery, particularly that of Cook’s voyages, the second case study locates Ross’s field drawings and the illustrations that circulated in his *Narrative* based on these in relationship to existing conventions for representing exploration. Centring on three illustrations that featured images of the expedition’s interactions with Inuit, the case study develops in two specific directions. The first draws comparisons between these three images and the texts they accompanied in Ross’s *Narrative*, while the second looks at the differences between the illustrations and their original sources in three of Ross’s field drawings. Taken together, the comparisons made between these different media seek

to uncover the potential slippages that occurred as Ross's original experience of the Arctic was mediated for public consumption. Showing parallels with the 'encounter' and 'entertainment' drawings produced by Cook's artists, Ross's images similarly give the impression that an atmosphere of amicability and mutual understanding tended to characterise meetings between explorers and native peoples. However, it seems that Ross may have been more concerned with communicating to the readers of his *Narrative* the ways in which he was able to make use of the Inuit in achieving the goals of the expedition. The case study thus continues to reveal, in addition to Ross's ongoing need to regain his reputation, the possible influence on his thinking of the burgeoning racial sciences of the nineteenth century, which increasingly considered 'savage' peoples to be separate from Europeans.

The third case study takes more clearly as its focus the interactions between Arctic exploration and the emerging life sciences of the nineteenth century. Placing Ross's 'images' of Inuit and their re-presentations in his *Appendix* in relationship to the ethnographic convention, the case study examines more specifically the intersection between Ross's representation of Inuit and contemporary discussions of 'savages'. Of particular importance here is Ross's involvement in phrenology, a quasi-scientific movement in today's terms, in which he was both an active member and firm believer. Comparing the images of Inuit appearing in his *Appendix* with George Francis Lyon's illustrations for William Edward Parry's published expedition account of 1824, the case study suggests that while Ross's images and their reproductions aspired to new scientific ideals, they fell short of this ambition. To this end, the case study attempts to trace out a peculiar confluence of factors: overlapping and at times competing ideas about 'savages'; Ross's limitations as an artist; and the uneasy way in which the ethnographic convention was combined with claims to intimacy regarding the individuals pictured. Although the representations of Inuit Ross produced in the Arctic for the purposes of his *Appendix* were meant to act as valuable scientific documents, they contain awkward linkages to the storyline he constructed for his expedition. The 'individual' details Ross selected and worked into his images often refer to personal anecdotes that served to both stereotype Inuit and,

perhaps paradoxically, undermine his attempt to arrive at an objective representation of the Inuit 'type'.

As with the last chapter, it is again worth noting whom the likely audiences of Ross's visual productions may have been, as this gives some indication of the direct impact his representation of the Arctic may have had on the general public. While Ross's account may have been available in different libraries throughout Britain, the people who would have been able to buy it would have been members of the middle and upper classes. Ross's *Narrative* and *Appendix* cost more than two pounds each, making them far too expensive for the majority of British society at the time. The popular exhibitions, by contrast, may have reached a broader cross-section of society.¹ In 1834 for example, the proprietors of a new rotunda on the Mound in Edinburgh offered substantially cheaper tickets to a panorama of Ross's Second Voyage, with admission to the gallery being reduced from one shilling down to six pence specifically for 'Working people and Servants'.² Although there may have been similar deals on offer in London, surviving evidence suggests that Ross's popular exhibitions here were primarily for the prosperous, with the cheapest documented entry cost being one shilling.³

¹ According to Comment, while the initial audience were 'connoisseurs', panoramic displays quickly became available to the 'middle class' as prices were reduced from three to one shilling in the early nineteenth century. Comment, 1999, p. 115.

² *Caledonian Mercury* 4 September 1834.

³ Ross's diorama at Queen's Bazaar cost one shilling, while the moving panorama exhibited in the Royal Gardens cost four. *Examiner* 9 March 1834a. *Morning Chronicle* 23 June 1834. Ross's panorama at Leicester Square was advertised in *The Morning Post* and did not list the price of the entry ticket. However, *The Morning Post* was an expensive daily newspaper (seven pence) whose readership was the cultural elite, which suggests that visitors to Ross's panorama belonged to the same comfortable group. Moreover, the entrance to Leicester Square Theatre in 1819 cost one shilling. Possibly, the price was the same or similar in 1834. *Morning Post* 13 January 1834. *Morning Post* 7 February 1834. *Morning Chronicle* 19 May 1819. Altick, 1957, p. 354; Brown, 1985, p. 19.

Ross's Second Voyage and Visual Production

In mid-October 1833, Ross returned to England from an expedition to 'Boothia Felix', now Boothia Peninsula, in Nunavut.⁴ Aided by a group of Netsilik Inuit, who Ross and his men relied on for geographic information and fresh meat primarily during their first winter in the Arctic, the expedition successfully surveyed the eastern and the south-western coastline of Boothia Peninsula and the northern coastline of King William Island. They also discovered the Magnetic North Pole. Yet overall, the expedition was greatly unsuccessful. Ross predicted his voyage would last fifteen months, and had taken two years' of provisions to the Arctic. In the end, however, he and his men spent more than four years trapped in the ice. The expedition's main objective of finding a passage southwest of Prince Regent Inlet and Somerset Island was not only left unrealised, it was compromised almost from the start.

Ross departed England in May 1829 in a single vessel equipped with a steam engine.⁵ The *Victory* sailed to Boothia Peninsula and, after progressing as far as possible through the ice in Prince Regent Inlet that year, spent its first winter – from early October 1829 to July 1830 – at an anchorage Ross named Felix Harbour. With the temperature rising and ice thawing, Ross attempted to sail back to England. His expedition was trapped in the ice after only three miles, however, and was forced to spend a second winter – this time from September 1830 to late August 1831 – in a new anchorage named Sheriff Harbour. Ross again tried to sail home, but found his expedition trapped within four miles. He and his men spent their third winter at an anchorage named Victory Harbour, from October 1831 to May 1832, at which time Ross decided to abandon ship. Leaving the *Victory* behind, the expedition travelled northwards by foot, arriving at Fury Beach on Somerset Island – where Parry's Third

⁴ SPRI MS 1152 Ross, 1829-1833. The expedition's progress is outlined in Ross's letter to Beaufort.

⁵ The Admiralty supplied Ross with a sixteen-ton tender, named the *Kreusenstern*, which was towed behind the *Victory*.

Voyage (1824-1825) had been forced to leave behind one of its vessels, the *Fury*, seven years earlier – in July 1832. Ross and his crew constructed a shelter named Somerset House where, after a failed attempt to reach Lancaster Sound in August 1832, they lived off the *Fury*'s stores for the next year. In July 1833, Ross's expedition left Somerset Island in small boats and, this time, made it into Lancaster Sound. Here, they were rescued when the crew of the *Isabella*, a British whaling vessel, came across them by chance in August 1833.⁶

A sailor since the age of nine, Ross had no formal education except for a four-year apprenticeship carried out on different merchant vessels in his early youth.⁷ While gaining expertise in the art of seamanship, Ross consequently missed out on the drawing classes he would have been offered had he been a naval cadet at the Royal Naval College in Portsmouth, for example.⁸ Ross was in any case rather limited in his talents as a draughtsman, a fact Barrow pointed out quite clearly when writing for the *Quarterly Review* in 1835, commenting that Ross's Arctic field drawings 'would have disgraced the fingers of a schoolboy of twelve'.⁹

Nonetheless, Ross diligently produced at least eighty-one watercolour sketches during the four years his Second Voyage spent in the Arctic.¹⁰ Despite the difficult circumstances his expedition endured, particularly during their departure from the Arctic, Ross made sure to safeguard his sketches and bring them back to England. This suggests a number of things. Like the expedition account, on-the-spot sketches resulting from exploration served as important records of actual events. Well aware of the public's appetite for Arctic expeditions, Ross may have sought to capitalise on this by offering his sketches as a basis for popular exhibitions. The sketches also seem to have played a vital part in Ross's attempt to re-establish his reputation as one of the foremost Arctic explorers of his generation. The total disaster of Ross's Second Voyage provided a fitting platform for realising this aim. As seen from press

⁶ For a detailed account see Fleming, 2001 (1998), chapter 18; Edinger, 2004.

⁷ For more on Ross's life and career, see Ross, 1994.

⁸ Baigent, 2004; Dickinson, 2007, p. 49.

⁹ Barrow quoted in Ross, 1994, p. 190.

¹⁰ Now kept at the Scott Polar Research Institute's collection.

reports covering Ross's return, it was not failure, but the expedition's narrow escape from death that became the subject of interest.¹¹ The public was eager to learn how Ross and his men had lived and managed to survive for so many years in the Arctic wilderness. They were also curious about the expedition's discoveries, especially its encounter with the Netsilik Inuit. Responding to public interests, it seems Ross used these themes to great advantage.

Back in Britain, Ross never exhibited the watercolours he produced in the Arctic in their original form. Instead he embraced the modern forms of visual media, hiring eminent artists and artist-engravers to improve and reproduce his originals. Copies of his watercolours were then deployed in two ways: for the production of at least three popular exhibitions and almost 50 illustrations in his two-volume expedition account. Perhaps in an attempt to maximise profit, Ross tactically released the images in one medium at a time.

In the course of 1834, Ross was involved in the staging of a panorama, a diorama and what seems to have been a cross between a moving panorama and diorama in London.¹² The first, a Panorama at Leicester Square, opened as early as January 1834, only two and a half months after Ross's return. A Diorama at the Queen's Bazaar, Oxford Street subsequently opened later that same month. In the early summer of 1834, there was a further 'Grand Scenic Representation' at the Royal Gardens, Vauxhall. Only in 1835, after the popular exhibitions had run their course in London, did Ross then publish his expedition account. The *Narrative* appeared in May while the *Appendix*, containing the expedition's scientific results, was eventually released five months later. The delayed publication of his expedition account seems rather intentional. Compared to the publication of the expedition

¹¹ *Bristol Mercury* 19 October 1833; *Caledonian Mercury* 17 October 1833; *Examiner* 20 October 1833; *Hull Packet* 18 October 1833; *Jackson's Oxford Journal* 19 October 1833; *Leeds Mercury* 19 October 1833; *Liverpool Mercury* 18 October 1833; *Morning Chronicle* 18 October 1833; *Preston Chronicle* 19 October 1833; *Times* 21 October 1833.

¹² For discussions of these nineteenth-century phenomena, including their similarities and differences, see Oettermann, 1997; Comment, 1999.

account of Parry's Second Voyage, for example, Ross really took his time.¹³ While Parry had published his account within five months after returning from the Arctic, as was typical for Arctic exploration, Ross waited a full eighteen months.¹⁴

This chronology points to a central feature of Ross's Second Voyage – namely, that the expedition was a private venture. Every other expedition to come before his had been organised and sent out by the Royal Navy. By contrast, Ross's Second Voyage was organised and partly paid for by Ross himself, with the bulk of the funding coming from Booth. This unusual arrangement can be linked to events that took place more than fifteen years earlier. In 1818 the Admiralty selected Ross as Captain for a very prestigious expedition – Britain's first attempt of the century to find a Northwest Passage. While success was highly anticipated, this expedition, Ross's First Voyage, came back without even having made it out of Baffin Bay.¹⁵ Moreover, Ross declared that Lancaster Sound – then presumed to be the entrance of the route to the Pacific Ocean – was barred. This 'discovery' was very unpopular with the Admiralty, especially its Second Secretary John Barrow. Fellow officers who took part in the expedition, such as Parry and Edward Sabine, also opposed Ross's assessment of Lancaster Sound. Unconvinced by Ross's conclusion, the Admiralty sent out a new expedition to re-explore this area the following year. Led by Parry who was still only a lieutenant and had just served as Ross's second in command, this new expedition sailed straight through Lancaster Sound and continued westward for many miles.¹⁶

Ross's mistake led people to question his quality as a scientist and leader. He fell out of favour with Barrow, and the Admiralty – already struggling to employ the great surplus of naval officers resulting from the Napoleonic Wars – never hired him

¹³ Parry, 1824a.

¹⁴ This also marks a major change for Ross: the account of his First Voyage was released four months after the expedition's return. See Ross, 1819.

¹⁵ *Caledonian Mercury* 26 October 1818; *Examiner* 27 September 1818; *Liverpool Mercury* 30 October 1818.

¹⁶ Holland and Savelle, 1987, pp. 67-68; Roskill, 2004-2011.

again.¹⁷ Having once been the leader of the century's most prized expedition to date, Ross obviously wanted to recover his lost social standing.

Conducting his Second Voyage as a commercial enterprise outside the authority of the Admiralty, Ross had more freedom to decide the form and content of his popular exhibitions and *Narrative* – his involvement in realising these was in fact highly unusual for the time. According to the Admiralty's instructions to expeditions bound North in 1818, for example, captains were required to hand in their accounts, as well as all logs, journals and memoranda by other officers and petty officers, to the Admiralty immediately upon their return to England. These documents would then be disposed or made use of as the Admiralty thought proper to determine.¹⁸ In this way the Admiralty took complete control and ownership of all naval exploration, editing and standardising expedition accounts, and using a set publisher and format. Ross attempted to do much the same. Assuming the position of highest authority for his expedition in 1829, Ross required every officer to surrender all visual and written documents from the journey to him.¹⁹ Thus, it was clearly Ross's intention that the only account of the Second Voyage to be made available to the public would come from him.²⁰ In the case of the visual material, the images that ended up in circulation through Ross's popular exhibitions, *Appendix* and *Narrative* were copied from a limited selection of his original watercolours.²¹ Ross effectively created a monopoly, with the expedition's story progressively becoming his story and his alone.

¹⁷ Fleming, 2001 (1998), p. 11.

¹⁸ Ross, 1819, 13.

¹⁹ Huish, 1835, 111.

²⁰ As Ross told William Scoresby, a whaling captain from Whitby, one of the reasons for being his own publisher was 'that I might keep the property entirely in my own hands'. Ross quoted in Ross, 1994, p. 182.

²¹ Ross was not entirely successful in managing this. In addition to Robert Huish's book, a critical account of the Second Voyage, there was at least one rogue panorama on show in Bristol in 1834. Finally, one of Ross's crewmembers published a weekly serial recounting the expedition. Referred to as 'shilling trash' in his *Appendix*, Ross discredits this work as a pretend and fabulous narrative based on the fact that its author 'possessed no journal or record of the voyage'. See Potter, 2007, pp. 88-90; Huish, 1835; Ross, 1835a, p. cxli.

Literature Review

Previous scholarship to have dealt with Ross's representation of the Arctic and, more specifically, the Netsilik Inuit, in his popular displays, *Narrative* and *Appendix* is somewhat limited. Karen Langgård is one of the few authors to engage, if briefly, with this material. Although she focuses only on his textual production, Langgård makes the valid point that Ross's views toward the Netsilik Inuit were both conflicting and ambiguous. Arguing that Ross recognised and respected Inuit technology and geographical knowledge while simultaneously expressing great contempt for their supposedly 'savage' habits and deficient intellectual capabilities, Langgård finds these rather opposing accounts of Inuit to be particularly notable when making comparisons between Ross's *Narrative* and *Appendix*.²² In addition to Langgård's work, both David and Potter have looked into the visual material resulting from Ross's Second Voyage.

David includes a broad sampling Ross's exploration imagery in a wider discussion of the presence of Inuit in exploration 'images' and re-presentations, primarily in a move to prove – in what is a corrective to Spufford's work – that Inuit did in fact appear in stories of discovery and achievement before mid century. Though giving some description and analysis of the visual material resulting from Ross's Second Voyage, David's overall approach and wide scope seems to preclude a thorough and detailed understanding of Ross's production.²³ The historical and artistic contexts of the images – including the background and circumstances of Ross's Second Voyage, the possible interaction between Ross's representations and the new life sciences of the nineteenth century, and the aesthetic conventions Ross may have looked to – are not for example adequately developed in David's book.²⁴

²² Langgård, 2007, pp. 313-317.

²³ David briefly treats only two of the popular exhibitions and two of the prints in the *Narrative*.

²⁴ David, 2000, pp. 48-49, 150-153.

Potter's work on the visual material emerging from Ross's Second Voyage is arguably the most important contribution to scholarship to date. His research uncovered an extensive amount of primary source material, documenting a number of the popular exhibitions that were connected to Ross's expedition both in Britain and beyond. Potter's documentary approach is particularly rich in its coverage of Ross's first popular exhibition at Leicester Square. He makes good use of the reviews of this panorama in order to give the reader a comprehensive idea of both what this panorama may have looked like and how the nineteenth-century viewer might have experienced it. In addition he includes extracts from the private journal of the painter of this particular panorama, revealing the depth to which Ross involved himself in the processes of re-presentation. While Potter's coverage of this engaging material is, like Langgård's, useful also for pointing to Ross's prejudices toward the Inuit, his commendable reconstruction of Ross's panorama at Leicester Square and the terms of its production does not come to terms with other aspects of Ross's visual output, in particular the imagery – and their interrelationships – appearing in the *Narrative* and *Appendix*.²⁵

The Popular Exhibitions, 1834

The panorama and its derivatives, such as the diorama and the various forms of moving panoramas, were a quintessentially nineteenth-century phenomenon. As money-making enterprises, these popular exhibitions – which were most often housed in purpose-built theatres called rotundas – tended to be located in the commercial and entertainment districts of European cities, where they were most advantageously sited to attract crowds of people of different age, sex and class at a time. The panorama theatres of Paris for example were situated, together with variety theatres and cabaret shows, along the city's great thoroughfares such as Boulevard Montmartre and the Champs-Élysées. In Edinburgh, a panorama rotunda was erected on the Mound – an area similarly characterised by a range of temporary and permanent attractions including an art museum, botanical garden and shopping

²⁵ Potter, 2007, pp. 59-70, 87-90.

district. Though different in size and appearance, the panoramas and their like were large-scale paintings that usually showed spectacular views of a recurring selection of motifs: primarily European cityscapes, battle scenes or distant and ‘exotic’ places. The Arctic, or more precisely Arctic exploration, was a common theme of the popular exhibitions, prevalent both in Britain and – as briefly touched upon in the last chapter – other parts of Europe and also North America. In many ways comparable to today’s cinema, the popular exhibitions of the nineteenth century often toured both within and between countries and, although they purported to be educational due to their ‘accuracy’, they mostly catered to people in search of pleasure. Despite their prevalence throughout the nineteenth century, very few of these popular displays have survived. There are two primary reasons for this. Bound up in commercial interests, the large canvases on which panoramas were displayed were typically painted over and reused for new shows in order to maximise profit. At the same time, their frequent circulation resulted in heavy wear through constant installation and demounting at each new location.²⁶

View of the Continent of Boothia – The Panorama at Leicester Square

In early January 1834, a number of London newspapers carried an advertisement announcing the opening of a ‘splendid Picture of Boothia, the only Panoramic View executed from the drawings of Captain Ross’ at Robert Burford’s Leicester Square Panorama.²⁷ The panorama, titled *View of the Continent of Boothia*, was based on Ross’s original watercolours and painted under his immediate inspection by Burford’s collaborator, Henry Courtney Selous. Although the panorama no longer exists and there are no secondary images of it available, copies of the descriptive catalogue originally sold in Burford’s theatre have been preserved; large portions of its text were also reprinted verbatim in periodicals at the time.²⁸ The catalogue includes a long text made up of geographical information, a historical survey of the search for a Northwest Passage, a brief summary of Ross’s Second Voyage and a description of the panorama written by Ross. There is also a foldout legend showing

²⁶ For excellent studies of the popular exhibitions see the comprehensive works of Comment, 1999; and Oettermann, 1997.

²⁷ See for example, *Times* 14 January 1834; *Morning Chronicle* 8 January 1834.

²⁸ Burford, 1834. See for example, *Bell’s Weekly Magazine* 18 January 1834.

how *View of the Continent of Boothia* would have fully encircled the viewer with a 360 degree-scene of the area Ross and his crew explored between 1829 and 1833, which is further demonstrated by an 1801 section drawing of the Leicester Square Panorama (**Figs. 3.1, 3.2**). Using the legend, the viewer could identify the twenty-one numbered items making up the composition – such as ‘8. Magnetic Pole’, ‘12. Aurora Borealis’ and ‘18. Polar Bear’ – with the catalogue providing further information about these. Although *View of the Continent of Boothia* certainly seems to have adhered to the genre’s underlying ambition of giving the viewer – in addition to both educational and entertainment value – a feeling of being inside the scene, its apparently objective presentation of landscape and the expedition’s findings was perhaps most concerned with telling a narrative.

Ross’s panorama confronted its viewers, whose vantage point was meant to be that of Ross’s tent in the Arctic, with a vast landscape of snow and icy peaks. Within this bleak and harsh environment the only signs of life and activity was Ross’s crew and the Netsilik Inuit. *View of the Continent of Boothia* was in this sense the opposite of most nineteenth-century panoramas, which usually presented busy, eventful scenes such as cityscapes, rich and spectacular nature such as Niagara Falls, or warm and oriental sites like Cairo. While atypical for a panorama in this regard, *View of the Continent of Boothia* of course corresponded well with how the public already envisioned the Arctic – ‘a spot’, according to *The Times*, ‘only associated in our minds with ideas of gloom and desolation [...] a subject [...] dull and monotonous’.²⁹

As a backdrop, this ‘interminable field of ice and snow, whose very barrenness [...] conveys a feeling of total privation and utter desolation’ served to focus attention on the singular event displayed: the first meeting between Ross’s expedition and the Netsilik Inuit.³⁰ This event, which was one of the highlights of the Second Voyage, took place at noon on 9 January 1830 while the *Victory* was at its first winter

²⁹ *Times* 14 January 1834.

³⁰ Burford, 1834, p. 5.

anchorage, Felix Harbour.³¹ Filling up a quarter of the foreground of the composition, the scene displayed shows a group of about 20 people and two sleds arranged in a line. The *Victory*, a couple of observation points, a peak prominently marked with a flag, and a cluster of igloos labelled ‘9. Esquimaux Village’ serve as a backdrop. As Potter has documented through his work with Selous’s diary, Ross was very concerned with the accuracy of the scene shown in the Leicester Square Panorama. This suggests that the composition closely followed Ross’s field drawings from the Arctic, and a comparison between these and the legend and descriptions published in the pamphlet certainly gives the impression that parts of Ross’s ‘images’ – including landscape features, people, ships and igloos – were collaged together to make up the panorama. The ship, observatories and landscape of *Felix Harbour* and the ‘Esquimaux village’ and mountainous background of *North Hendon* seem identifiable for example, and it is quite likely that Selous used Ross’s full-length figure drawings of the Netsilik Inuit as the basis for many of the figures that would have populated the panorama’s giant canvas (**Figs. 3.3, 3.4**). Two of Ross’s field drawings of Inuit individuals almost certainly came into play; although they were shown seated in sleds in the panorama, the men pictured in *Alictu* and *Tulluahiu* are – after correcting typical discrepancies in orthography – those referred to by name in both the legend and its accompanying description (**Figs. 3.5, 3.6**).

Ross used Burford’s catalogue to give his viewers a particular account of the scene before them, explaining how this was the moment after the explorers and Inuit had reached a mutual understanding of peace and good intention. Ross sets the scene by describing how he and his officers first ‘obtained their confidence, by giving them presents’ and then ‘persuaded them to accompany his party to the Victory’:

In the foreground are seen the Officers and the Natives proceeding to the ship. Illictu [an Inuit elder who was the first to approach Ross and his men] [...] is seen on the sledge drawn by Capt. Ross, No. 5, and his party of sailors. Tullooachiu, the man who had lost a leg, is seen on another sledge, drawn by Commander James Ross, No. 6, and another party, the rest of the Natives are following, and by signs and gestures, expressing their surprise at every object, which is new and wonderful to them.³²

³¹ Ross in Burford, 1834, p. 13.

³² Ross in Burford, 1834, pp. 13-14.

While of course only a substitute for the panorama, the black and white diagram presented by the legend suggests that this text was closely matched on canvas. In the legend Ross is standing at the front of the group, pointing with one arm towards the ship. He is not only first in line, but also clearly in charge of the situation. The significance of the explorers' role and particularly Ross's as the initiators and leaders seems amplified by the Arctic wilderness surrounding them, expressing their bravery, control and manliness.

The remainder of the composition further reinforced these ideas, with the numbered legend charting the explorers' subsequent conquering of this landscape. As we read clockwise around the circular diagram, we find Ross's expedition progressively asserting their mastery over the Inuit's domain. Of the 21 entries in the legend's key, four are places used by Ross and his crew for scientific observations. Seven more are land claimed (through naming) by the expedition.

As the panorama promoted the expedition, it seems to have contrastingly devalued the Inuit. Pictured together with the explorers, it would have been possible, due to the panorama's large scale and their positioning in the foreground, to study the Inuit's different build, implements and clothes in great detail. The catalogue certainly guided the panorama's viewers in how to think about 'these poor people':

Insulated by nature from the rest of the world, they have no idea of any other human beings, and there is more of the true spirit of contentment to be found amongst them than is probably to be met with in any other class of mankind whatsoever. Happy in his smoaky dwelling, the Esquimaux knows no want [...] and the climate forbids his desiring anything beyond common animal wants. In person they are short, but stoutly made, the complexion is olive, the face broad, and the eyes small and piercing, good humour is fully expressed, but they have an indescribable mixture of wildness and ignorance [...] The present party of males is represented on their road to the ship, which they visited without the least hesitation, expressing great astonishment at all they saw, and their delight at the trinkets presented them by loud gesticulations, and incessant leaping.³³

³³ Burford, 1834, p. 15.

The Inuit were, in other words, like children – content as long as their primary needs were covered, ignorant and carefree about anything else and wanting in conduct and social manners. The panorama’s posing of the ‘jolly’ ‘Esquimaux’ against the serious explorers who direct the group towards the highly technological ship, thus appears to have asserted the idea that the Inuit were objects for scientific study and a part of the expedition’s discoveries. Although able to live in the Arctic, they were still intellectually and technologically inferior to the explorers.

The Diorama at the Queen’s Bazaar

As *View of the Continent of Boothia* was exhibited in Burford’s theatre in Leicester Square, Ross was involved in a second show, which opened in the fashionable Queen’s Bazaar – which featured dioramas and displays of paintings in addition to shops – on Oxford Street the same month.³⁴ Again realised under Ross’s direct superintendence, this diorama was painted by the artist E. Lambert, who later became famous for his diorama of the 1834 fire in the Houses of Parliament.³⁵ A diorama as opposed to a panorama, the Queen’s Bazaar exhibition offered the viewer a different experience. While panoramas presented an all-encompassing scope, intending to give the viewer a feeling of being in the landscape represented, they were generally criticised for being static and life-less.³⁶ Animal and human figures, for example, were commonly thought to detract from the panorama’s realism, and artists were often encouraged to avoid depicting humans and animals altogether. By contrast, the diorama’s use of light, depth and colour filters, made it possible to suppress or reveal objects, for example gradually changing the appearance of a landscape from morning to night.³⁷ Employing this sort of technology, Ross’s

³⁴ Cruchley, 1834, p. 124; Knight, 2007 (1842), pp. 15-16.

³⁵ *Morning Chronicle* 21 January 1834; Potter, 2007, p. 87. Altick, 1978, p. 176.

³⁶ Altick, 1978, p. 198.

³⁷ Louis-Jacques-Mandé Daguerre’s nineteenth-century diorama of an Alpine scene, explains the principle of the diorama. His show started with a view of this landscape in the morning, with mist covering a village at the foot of a mountain in the background. As in a film, the landscape would gradually change from a morning to an evening view. Over a fifteen-minute time span, the same view would show a moon over the mountains, while the mist had disappeared and lights from the village reflecting in the water. Comment, 1999, chapter 4.

Queen's Bazaar diorama was potentially more animated and dramatic than its counterpart in Leicester Square.

As Ross's diorama at the Queen's Bazaar has not been preserved, it is difficult to know what it may have looked like and how it may have functioned. Although there were running advertisements in newspapers such as the *Morning Chronicle* and the *Examiner*, these are consistently short and contain scarce information beyond the fact that the show was comprised of the 'two most interesting views of the expedition' and, that it was exhibited simultaneously with 'the Grand Dioramic Picture of Belshazzar's Feast' and 'the Physiorama' for a total price of one shilling.³⁸ It appears the diorama presented its viewers with two successive scenes. The first seems to have been a depiction of the same scene presented in *View of the Continent of Boothia* – namely, the first meeting between the Netsilik Inuit and Ross's crew at the beginning of the expedition. The second scene seems to have come from the end of the Second Voyage, during Ross's crew's last winter in the Arctic. According to *The Morning Chronicle*, they were titled 'Ross's First Discovery and Interview' and 'Fury Beach' respectively.

While the panorama at Leicester Square gave a more general view of Ross's Second Voyage, it captured one particular event – the first meeting between explorers and Inuit. This process of selection and, as we will see, repetition of key moments from the expedition, continued in the diorama at Queen's Bazaar. Like the panorama at Leicester Square, the diorama was generated from Ross's field drawings, and it is likely he used an 'image' titled *First Communication* as the basis for its first scene (**Fig. 3.7**). Later reproduced as an illustration in Ross's *Narrative*, this watercolour sketch was evidently considered an important documentation of the expedition. Due to a higher representational quality than the original sketch, the print version of *First Communication* presents a clearer idea about what, according to Ross, took place when the explorers first encountered the Inuit (**Fig. 3.8**). This re-presentation shows the Inuit and British with their weapons, moments before the establishment of a peace agreement. The British party is pictured to the left and closer to the viewer;

³⁸ *Morning Chronicle* 21 January 1834; *Examiner* 9 March 1834b.

proceeding to the right and into the distance is a group of uncountable Inuit figures. 'Communication', or point of contact, takes place at the centre of the composition, between the British camp and this 'army' of Netsilik Inuit, where an Inuk seated in a sled seems to be waving one arm at three naval officers. With their arms raised over their heads and guns placed on the ground behind them, the officers are represented as initiating a peaceful meeting with the Inuit.

In more ways than one, the print suggests a British moral superiority. In addition to bravely laying down their guns first, differences in the landscape between the British and Inuit sides of the print add to this impression. On the left side of the composition, the viewer encounters signs of civilisation (such as ships and guns) comfortably enclosed by snow-covered mountains. On the other side of the composition, man-made constructions and sheltering mountains are replaced by a lifeless and seemingly endless landscape of ice and snow, which provides no comfort or shelter against the dark, threatening sky and hostile and barren environment. Placed in this part of the composition, as if emerging from the icy landscape, the Netsilik Inuit appear even more 'wild' and 'dangerous' than their army-like constellation. If based on Ross's watercolour and print, the diorama would have expressed the same tension and uncertainties during the expedition's first meeting with the Inuit. Through the common light and depth effects of the diorama, the figures of the explorers and Inuit would have been able to suddenly appear or come to the foreground, giving an illusion of movement and perhaps recreating the drama of the event.

The intention with the second scene, from Fury Beach, may similarly have been to show the drama and hardships faced by the expedition during its final year in the Arctic. *The Morning Chronicle*'s short advertisement for the diorama alludes to this, emphasising how the 'brave' crew had been 'frozen in' at Fury Beach for 'upwards of fifteen months'.³⁹ Three days prior to *The Morning Chronicle*'s advert for the opening of the show, a 'Brief Memoir of Captain Ross's Expedition' featured in *Bell's Weekly Magazine* accounting for the explorers' last year at Fury Beach, Somerset Island. Here, the crew lived off the stores of tinned food that Parry's

³⁹ *Morning Chronicle* 21 January 1834.

expedition had left behind in 1825 – which had, in addition to its lack of vitamin C, probably become poisonous. Having moved on from the area where the Netsilik Inuit lived during winter, the crew no longer had a supply of fresh meat and were therefore far more susceptible to outbreaks of scurvy and the ‘debility’ caused by lead poisoning.⁴⁰ As the article in *Bell’s Weekly Magazine* made clear to the nineteenth-century reader, this was definitely the most trying time for the explorers:

a fourth severe winter was passed in a canvass tent [...] their sufferings being greatly increased by want of bedding, clothing, and animal food. Mr. C. Thomas, the carpenter, here perished, and three others of the crew were reduced to the last state of debility. On the 8th of July, 1833, these intrepid individuals again left Fury Beach, being obliged to carry the three sick men who were unable to walk, and in six days reached the boats at Batty Bay; but it was not until the 15th of August, that they were able to put to sea. On the 26th, having crossed Navy Board Inlet, they descried a ship becalmed in the offing, which proved to be the *Isabella*.⁴¹

Ross created three watercolour sketches from this phase of the expedition – a landscape and two sections collectively entitled *Somerset House* – which he and Lambert may have used as the basis for a summer and winter scene from the crew’s last year in the Arctic (**Figs. 3.9, 3.10**). The landscape shows a view of a beach in summer with a small settlement consisting of Somerset House, tents and boats. Along the shore, the crew are seen busy testing and preparing the *Fury*’s and *Victory*’s boats for escape.

The plan and section drawings give an indication as to how Somerset House was divided up for use by Ross and his crew during the winter following their failed attempt to sail to Davis’s Strait. The reproductions of these images that were later published in Ross’s *Narrative* – together with their accompanying texts – give a far more detailed account of the ways in which the expedition was spatially ordered at this particular encampment (**Fig. 3.11, 3.12**).⁴² The re-presented ground plan and section include text labels and human figures that are missing in the originals, showing how an internal wall divided Somerset House into two main parts, each

⁴⁰ Beattie and Geiger, 1987, pp. 29-30. Roskill, 2004-2011.

⁴¹ *Bell’s Weekly Magazine* 18 January 1834, pp. 13-14.

⁴² Ross, 1835b, pp. 688-689.

comprising a dining and a sleeping area. The officers occupied the space on the left side of this wall, which contained four small cabins in addition to a dining room. The space on the other side of the wall was where the rest of the crew ate and slept and, by contrast, consisted of only one large room. With immediate access from the outside, it was furnished with a large table in the centre and rows of beds along two of the outer walls.

Whether or not Lambert used these specific field drawings of Somerset House as sources for the diorama at Queen's Bazaar, the ground plan and section drawings in particular likely functioned as important evidence of the last phase of the expedition, especially for Ross. As is clear from his account of the expedition's stay at Fury Beach, this very bleak period during the voyage could easily have resulted in chaos and anarchy among the crew. Ross was of course acutely aware of this threat, having had to combat attempts at mutiny during the crew's recent trek from Victoria Harbour to Fury Beach.⁴³ The plan and sections he drew of Somerset House may thus have been conceived and produced, at least in part, to serve as visual testimony for audiences back home of his success in creating and maintaining order and 'civilisation' in a foreign wilderness. While the large flags that feature prominently in the sketches act as strong symbols of national confidence, the ground plan and section drawings seem to imply that naval order and discipline were kept intact throughout the journey. Although the diorama at Queen's Bazaar may not have shown a ground plan and section in its second scene, it is quite possible that it could have conveyed – through a more developed rendering, such as an interior perspective – similar ideas about the expedition and Ross's leadership especially.

'A Grand Scenic Representation' at the Royal Gardens, Vauxhall

On 30 May 1834, a third popular exhibition connected to Ross's Second Voyage opened in the Royal Gardens, Vauxhall. Unlike the panorama at Leicester Square and the diorama at the Queen's Bazaar, this display was not defined under the usual terminology for popular exhibitions. Dubbed 'a grand scenic representation' in the handbills, Ross's exhibition took place in an open-air theatre and incorporated

⁴³ Ross, 1835b, pp. 345-346.

fireworks (**Fig. 3.13**).⁴⁴ According to surviving newspaper documentation, the exhibition was made up of three parts. These represented the expedition chronologically, showing the explorers' arrival at Felix Harbour, followed by a scene of their first winter-quarters there and lastly, their 'Departure, and Meeting with the *Isabella Whaler*'.⁴⁵ As with Ross's other two productions in London, his field drawings from the Arctic once more served as a basis, but it is again difficult – with the possible exception of the third part of this show – to ascertain which of these images might have been used.

The third and final part of the Royal Gardens exhibition is most likely based upon an 'image' of Ross's expedition's rescue in Davis's Strait that would presumably have been executed by Ross during the return journey to Britain, or shortly after his arrival back home. While no surviving sketch is known at present, the later inclusion of an 1834 print titled *The Victory's Crew Sav'd by the Isabella* in Ross's *Narrative* suggests that a very similar field drawing existed (**Fig. 3.14**). In any case, the print – which shows Ross's crew waving from three boats on the starboard side of the *Isabella* – may give an idea about what was depicted in the concluding scene at the Royal Gardens.

Descriptions in a surviving handbill for the show at the Royal Gardens suggest that it was either a type of moving panorama, a diorama or a combination of these.⁴⁶ A description of 'Part I' published in this handbill gives the impression of a dynamic scene. It is unclear however if movement was achieved through the various effects deployed in diorama shows, or through the two-part roller mechanism typical for moving panoramas:

Captain Ross's Steam Vessel, the *Victory*, approaches, steering amongst the small pieces of Floating Ice; but the Crew finding it impossible to make further progress, and the Vessel being completely hemmed in by Ice, lower the sails and prepare to go on shore, with the idea of abandoning the Vessel,

⁴⁴ Altick, 1978, pp. 320-321.

⁴⁵ *Morning Chronicle* 29 May 1834.

⁴⁶ The moving panorama was a long roll of canvas attached to two cylinders that by unreeling the one side and rolling up on the other displayed a continuously changing view. Comment, 1999, pp. 62-65.

which, however, being very little damaged, serve them as an excellent Dwelling during the ensuing Winter.⁴⁷

The descriptions of the remaining two scenes continue to suggest that movement was, in one way or another, a central feature of this visual experience, with Ross's selection and presentation of events again serving to – as had been the case already at Leicester Square and the Queen's Bazaar – reiterate and consolidate his account of the voyage.

At the same time, the exhibition in the Royal Gardens seems to have presented slightly different and more detailed scenes than those that had last been shown at the Queen's Bazaar. Although there appears to have been some parallels between these two displays, an important difference seems to have been the particular way in which the Inuit were included. While both the panorama at Leicester Square and the diorama at the Queen's Bazaar showed Ross's expedition's first contact with the Inuit, thus portraying them as discovered curiosities caught up by default in exploration, the exhibition at the Royal Gardens featured Inuit as active participants in discovery and exploration. Making great claims to accuracy, a description published in the handbill seems to have Inuit directly involved in the climax to the second part of the show – a reconstruction of what was, in fact, the most important discovery of Ross's Second Voyage:

The Crew are discovered working, and some taking their morning's exercise, making observations as was their custom [...] This part finishes with an exact Representation of the Ceremony and Procession of the Crew and Natives to the summit of the rock on the Continent of Boothia, where Commander J. Ross planted the British Flag on the spot under which the North Pole is supposed to be situate [sic].⁴⁸

The inclusion of the Netsilik Inuit in what was clearly a highlight of the show seems to have been an acknowledgement of the vital contributions that Inuit certainly did make to Ross's expedition. Indeed, the description of the second scene presented at the Royal Gardens could even be read as setting up a relationship between Inuit and explorers bordering almost on parity. However, accounts of the third part of the

⁴⁷ Ross, 1994, p. 166.

⁴⁸ Ross, 1994, p. 166.

show, especially its grand finale, suggest that Ross's audience – in this case London's elite – would ultimately have been left with quite the opposite impression.

Judging by the price of admission to the Royal Gardens show, which was four times more than the shilling it had already cost to see his previous diorama at the Queen's Bazaar, Ross's third and final show in London was without doubt aimed at the most prosperous and thus potentially influential members of society at the time.

Everything about this production was spectacular and extravagant, with the venue by itself covering an area of 60,000 square feet (5,572 square meters). Herein, visitors to each evening's event would have experienced 'immense icebergs', 'as large as reality', the majority of which were advertised as being over seventy feet high, with the entire spectacle being topped off by a display of fireworks.

Ross had apparently been anxious to get 'such a favourable spot' for his show. This suggests he was attuned to the importance of location and the ways in which a prestigious venue such as the Royal Gardens might have strategically enhanced his reputation. Unlike the comparatively more subtle attempts at self-promotion witnessed in his two previous displays, it seems Ross put no restrictions on himself here. The third and final part of Ross's 'Scenic Representation' at the Royal Gardens somewhat pompously closed with 'a grand allegorical display, complimentary to British enterprise'. As the handbill explained, the viewer would have been treated to a scene of great drama, with the emotional rescue of Ross and his crew by the *Isabella* going on to be eclipsed by a fantastical ending focused on Ross and Ross alone: 'In this Scene an Imitation will be given of one of those awful thunder storms which visit the Northern Regions: and at the close, a gigantic Image of Captain Ross will appear in his Polar Costume, rising from amidst the Icebergs. A superb exhibition of fireworks will conclude the entertainments'.⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Ross, 1994, p. 166.

A Comparison with Defoe and Franklin

Through the three popular exhibitions he mounted in London in the course of 1834, it seems that Ross offered to the British public a recognisable storyline reminiscent of heroic adventure stories such as Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, first published in 1719. Parallels can be found between the basic narrative of arrival, exploration and rescue articulated by Ross's popular exhibitions and Defoe's description of Crusoe's voyage to Africa, his time as a castaway on 'Island of Despair' and final rescue by an English vessel. Judging by the key moments that seem to have made up Ross's shows, it would appear that audiences at Leicester Square, the Queen's Bazaar and the Royal Gardens would have been able to follow a similar narrative of an adventure that meets with misfortune but ends with salvation.

One reason for turning to such a template, especially given the commercial nature of the popular exhibitions, could quite simply have been to attract and satisfy spectators, as well as to make a profit. Nineteenth-century audiences would – as now – have tended to respond best to tried and tested storylines, particularly when packed with drama and excitement. In using a recognisable and to some extent predictable model for the narrative of his popular exhibitions, Ross was more or less guaranteed success.

At the same time, there may have been a more personal motive at stake. Not unlike Defoe's work, the narrative structure that seems to have driven Ross's popular exhibitions may have used notions of Providence similar to those found in *Robinson Crusoe* to emphasise a Christian morality. As a captain in the Royal Navy, good Christian conduct – or at least the appearance of it – was clearly important to Ross, a fact made apparent in the comparison he set up in his *Narrative* between his expedition and 'the history of the wreck of the Meduse', the French naval frigate that ran aground off the coast of Mauritania in 1816. In explaining why his crew and the French sailors of the *Méduse* had responded so differently to the disasters in which they were involved, Ross puts forth as evidence nationality, discipline, rank and

religion.⁵⁰ While the French ‘gave in’ to cannibalism and madness, Ross’s men – and Ross in particular, if he is to be believed – went beyond expectations and duties in caring for the ‘sick and enfeebled men’ that had so ‘encumbered’ the expedition.⁵¹ Simultaneously, Ross attempts to deflect focus from himself, making his actions synonymous with the very notion of what, according to him, it meant to be British. Thus, he ‘did no more than it was proper to do, and which I should do again in the same circumstances: yet is this not [sic] boasting, since I am sure that every British officer would do the same, as I know that every Christian man ought, in any situation’.⁵²

From this it seems Ross – who elsewhere in his *Narrative* advocated the idea that one must always trust ‘to Providence’ – was perhaps prone to understanding his expedition’s capacity to endure hardship, as well as its high survival rate under trying circumstances, as God’s reward for their unrelenting belief and morals.⁵³ As in Defoe’s story, it is plausible that the storyline presented by Ross’s popular shows in London carried within it the message that he and his men had ‘earned’ their Divine rescue through hardship, suffering and, most importantly, an unbending Christian morality.

There is another possible reference point, perhaps more obvious than adventure stories like Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, that may have impacted the choices Ross made in managing the public representation of his Second Voyage in the months immediately following his return to England. Seven years before Ross set sail, Franklin had returned from his First Overland Expedition – a three-year expedition through the Canadian Arctic begun in 1819. Employed by the Admiralty to map the north coast of the American continent, his expedition ran out of supplies and, to make matters worse, was unable to live off the land, resulting in the deaths of several men. After returning to England in 1822, stories of the expedition’s suffering became highly popular with the public and, in 1823, Franklin’s resulting narrative became an

⁵⁰ Ross, 1835b, pp. 705-706.

⁵¹ Ross, 1835b, pp. 705-706. Miles, 2007.

⁵² Ross, 1835b, p. 706.

⁵³ Ross, 1835, p. 180.

overnight bestseller, firmly establishing him in popular consciousness as the man who ate his boots.⁵⁴

As Ross was probably aware, there were clear parallels between his and Franklin's expeditions, and the remarkable popularity of Franklin's published account may have caused suffering to become an element in Ross's representation of his Second Voyage as well – particularly, it would seem, in the Queen's Bazaar diorama. The public, who had delighted in reading about the miseries of Franklin's journey eleven years earlier – including accounts of a crew member turned cannibal who was eventually executed for this crime – probably expected a similar tale from Ross.⁵⁵ Yet, while he may very well have capitalised on popular appetites for tales of gruelling hardship in the Arctic, it seems probable that Ross would have been more concerned with separating his expedition – including even its stories of suffering – from that of Franklin.

A problem with Franklin's expedition may have been its lack of discipline, especially with regards to the Métis and indigenous voyageurs that he had hired as guides. During the last phase of the expedition when the men were faced with starvation and death, an Iroquois guide named Michel Teroahauté had, in addition to allegedly shooting midshipman Robert Hood, started eating the bodies of dead crewmembers – a crime for which he was executed.⁵⁶ Although Franklin was hailed as a hero by the general public, who were quick to separate between the specific actions of the British and non-British members of his expedition – it was not their

⁵⁴ Fleming, 2001 (1998), p. 123. Published for first time in the first quarter of 1823, Franklin's *Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea, in the Years 1819, 1820, 1821 and 1822* went into its third edition already by October 1824. *Morning Chronicle* 17 March 1823. *Morning Chronicle* 21 October 1824.

⁵⁵ As seems clear from a later advertisement published in the *Hampshire Telegraph*, Ross's *Narrative* at least certainly delivered (minus the cannibalism) in this respect: 'Never did we read a History of almost unexampled disappointment, labour, suffering, and peril, written in a tone so free from querulousness [sic]. Never, perhaps, did a body of even British Seamen exhibit an example of so much steadiness, sobriety, patience, and alacrity to undergo fatigue and endure privation, and submission to judicious restraint, as the companions of Sir John Ross.' See, *Hampshire Telegraph* 15 June 1835.

⁵⁶ Richardson quoted in Franklin, 1824, pp. 403-407.

countrymen, in other words, who had lost their humanity – in the eyes of navy men Franklin could have been criticised for losing control over his men.⁵⁷

The tale Ross told seems to have made it clear that his expedition, despite experiencing equally difficult circumstances, had never gotten to this point because Ross, as captain and leader of his expedition, was always master of the situation. Ross's inclusion of Inuit in his three popular exhibitions may thus have served a rather particular purpose, potentially drawing attention to his authority and skilfulness as a leader, especially his ability to control the 'natives' and use them to his advantage. In this way, Ross's shows at Leicester Square, the Queen's Bazaar and the Royal Gardens may thus have sought to script his Second Voyage – which had of course been an abject failure – as an overwhelming success. In a very direct way, Ross's popular exhibitions in London seem to have made the most out of his expedition's various discoveries, perhaps in a bid to prove that his four-year undertaking had, despite the loss of his ship and some lives, been worth it. There are nonetheless suggestions that Ross's desire to prove the value of his Second Voyage stretched beyond rather straightforward notions of discovery.

The Narrative, May 1835

Thirty plates illustrate the first volume of Ross's published expedition account, titled the *Narrative*, which covers in over 700 pages of detail the daily activities and progress of the entire voyage. Taken together all of these images generally reiterate the basic storyline that had already been presented to a London public in Ross's three popular exhibitions of 1834. Many of the field drawings that appear to have been source material for Ross's shows at Leicester Square, the Queen's Bazaar and the Royal Gardens again circulate here. Although Ross's field drawings would undergo at least two steps of modification before being presented to the public in the context

⁵⁷ In his research, Stephen Wolfe at the University of Tromsø has found that this was particularly the case with Barrow. Personal correspondence with author, 21 and 28 February 2008. For other professionals' critique of Franklin's management of his expedition see Fleming, 2001 (1998), chapter 9.

of his *Narrative*, Ross stressed in his introduction that these were ultimately true and authentic depictions – despite his artistic limitations and processes of reproduction – of his experiences in the Arctic:

The sketches from which the drawings were made were taken by Mr. Ronald's invaluable perspective instrument, and therefore *must* be true delineations: these, although they have been partly redrawn by Harding and Rowbotham, and engraved on by the first engravers, whose names will be found on the plates, were originally my own sketches, but they are only offered to the public as faithful illustrations of the work, being well aware that I do not possess such talents in that art as could embellish it, were the scenery even more favourable.⁵⁸

Of these 'faithful illustrations', seven included representations of Inuit that document, from the moment of initial contact through the close interactions that followed, Ross's dealings with – as he was subsequently to describe them – 'the inhabitants of the most remote corner of the globe'.⁵⁹ As reflected in the illustrations, the expedition's primary motivations for establishing contact with the Netsilik Inuit were to acquire geographical knowledge about the area including the location of favourable hunting grounds and, importantly, to trade for fresh meat and fish. In addition to *First Communication*, which is the first plate in Ross's *Narrative* to show the Netsilik Inuit, three other plates are of particular interest for showing the range of activities and varied settings in which the explorers and the Inuit co-operated. Appearing in chronological order, *North Hendon*, *Ikmalick and Apelagliu* and *Umingmak (Commander J.C. Ross, killing a musk bull)* illustrate key events in Ross's *Narrative*, in effect filling in parts of the overarching storyline of arrival, exploration and rescue in the Arctic presented in Ross's preceding panoramas and dioramas. These prints not only serve to enhance Ross's textual account of his Second Voyage, they exist as readable visual stories in their own right and, moreover, reveal parallels with the 'encounter' and 'entertainment' drawings produced during Cook's voyages in the Pacific some sixty years earlier.

North Hendon

⁵⁸ Ross, 1835b, p. xiii. The engravers named on the plates are W. Say and J. Brandard.

⁵⁹ Ross, 1835a, p. ix.

Entitled *North Hendon*, the second illustration of the Netsilik Inuit that appears in Ross's *Narrative*, wherein it is the thirteenth plate overall. Presenting a group of people in front of a cluster of igloos, the print – engraved by W. Say – refers to the explorers' first visit to the Netsilik Inuit's temporary winter camp in January 1830 (**Fig. 3.15**). The purpose of this visit was to acquire geographical and environmental knowledge of the surrounding area, particularly to learn if there was a passage southwards and what game abounded in the region.⁶⁰ *North Hendon* features one Briton, most likely Ross in blue naval uniform and black hat, who with outstretched arms demonstrates to the Netsilik Inuit that he is not holding any weapons. As with this readily recognisable posture for expressing peaceful intent to potential enemies, a rifle placed on the ground suggests an atmosphere of tension and anxiety. In this way the print imparts a rather particular narrative, seemingly drawing attention to Ross's vulnerability.

The heroic measures suggested by the illustration conflict somewhat with Ross's written description of the event. According to the text, Ross had not only come accompanied by his own men, but his men were also not the first to put down their weapons. In a direct inversion of the scene pictured in *North Hendon*, Ross writes that before entering the village one of the Inuit 'who appeared to be a leader or chief' came out to meet them, 'holding up his arms to show that he had no weapons'.⁶¹ Only then did Ross and his men put aside their guns, after which the rest of the Netsilik Inuit threw their weapons 'into the air' and, 'with the usual exclamations, waited our approach'.⁶² In contrast to the illustration that accompanies it, Ross's textual account of this meeting implies a shared ethic between the two groups. Like the 'civilised' British, the Inuit come across as honest and reasonable. It seems something else happens in the print, wherein this crucial point is perhaps replaced by a more dramatic story, with the Inuit's moral parity being overwritten by notions of the intrepid explorer.

⁶⁰ Ross, 1835b, 250-252.

⁶¹ Ross, 1835b, 249.

⁶² Ross, 1835b, 249.

North Hendon is based on a field drawing Ross created on his first visit to the Netsilik Inuit's winter camp (**Fig. 3.4**). Showing two explorers, this original watercolour sketch is more in line with the written description of the event published in Ross's *Narrative*. Unlike the print, this scene gives the impression of a bustling village with no signs of danger – a discrepancy that can perhaps be explained by the fact that Ross, as described in the *Narrative*, sketched the Inuit camp at the end of the visit, long after the period of initial tension. These differences between field drawing and finished print may suggest that Ross was initially more interested in giving an accurate visual account of an Inuit winter camp than he was in telling a dramatic story. The four-year time lag separating the two scenes may account for the slippages between them. Together with Ross's co-operation with his engraver, this passing of time could have shifted Ross's priorities, with the dangers and uncertainties of Arctic exploration being considered a far more fiery and popular subject matter for the readers of his *Narrative*.

Ikmalick and Apelagliu

The next illustration in Ross's *Narrative*, plate fourteen, is an engraving by J. Brandard titled *Ikmalick and Apelagliu* (**Fig. 3.16**). Closely connected to *North Hendon* in time, this illustration tells the story of another event that also happened during the initial days of the expedition's contact with the Inuit at Felix Harbour. Two days after Ross and some of his men had first visited the Inuit settlement at North Hendon, two Inuit – a man named Ikmalick and his wife Apelagliu – came to the *Victory* together with four other Inuit men. The reason for their visit to Ross's vessel is linked to still another meeting that had happened the day before, also onboard the *Victory*, when Ross had presented two Inuit men, Tulluahi and Tiagashu, with a chart. To Ross's delight, the men had immediately understood the chart's purpose and function, and were able to add features to it such as lakes, capes, bays, rivers and islands, as well as possible travel routes. Despite their clearly extensive knowledge of the region, Tulluahi and Tiagashu had nonetheless told Ross that 'one of their party was a much better geographer', which seems to be the reason why Ikmalick – later nicknamed the 'Hydrographer' by the explorers – and Apelagliu subsequently came to the ship the following day, at which time Ross may

have sketched them sharing their knowledge of the region with three officers in the cabin of the *Victory*.⁶³

In the illustration published in Ross's *Narrative* one of the Inuit, most likely Ikmalick, draws a line – perhaps the coastline – on a sheet of paper spread out on the cabin's table. The very next illustration in Ross's *Narrative* links directly to this scene, with *Chart drawn by the natives* appearing to be the sheet of paper featured in *Ikmalick and Apelagliu* (**Fig. 3.17**). This chart was, however, most likely the end result of contributions made by several of the Netsilik Inuit Ross's expedition encountered. The day after Ikmalick and Apelagliu had visited the *Victory*, Ross received further help from an Inuit woman named Tiriksiu. Ootokiu and Kuanga, two other Inuit who visited the vessel during the expedition's first week at Felix Harbour, had also looked at the map and 'drew the lakes near Repulse Bay very accurately, together with the places of several inlets and rivers on the coast, both to the southward and westward'.⁶⁴

Ross's *Narrative* frequently mentions instances in which the explorers consulted the Netsilik Inuit for geographical information. Thus, while appearing to document a specific event, *Ikmalick and Apelagliu* does not represent an especially extraordinary event. While this illustration may capture Ikmalick's and Apelagliu's first visit to the *Victory*, the print may equally refer, in more general terms, to any number of times in which Ross's expedition had received expert knowledge and advice from the Netsilik Inuit with whom they co-operated. Judging from Ross's *Narrative*, it appears that the map-drawing skills and geographical knowledge of quite a few Netsilik Inuit had, in almost all instances, clearly and consistently impressed Ross.

As revealed in the comparison made between Ross's field drawing and its eventual engraving by W. Say in *North Hendon*, there are some discrepancies between Ross's and J. Brandard's versions of *Ikmalick and Apelagliu*. Unlike in Ross's original watercolour, the Inuit represented in the print are clearly shorter than the British

⁶³ Ross, 1835b, p. 255.

⁶⁴ Ross, 1835b, pp. 262-263.

officers. There appear to be some further differences in the faces and gazes of Apelagliu and the officer sitting to her left. While both look out toward the viewer in Ross's watercolour, in the print the officer's head is turned – causing him to look instead across the table to the officer sitting opposite. In this case, the somewhat subtle changes that have occurred in the transformation from field drawing to print seem primarily to be the result of corrections and improvements made to Ross's sketch – perhaps in an attempt to more visibly separate between the British and the Inuit, as well as to render apparent the physical differences between Inuit women and men.

If the officers pictured in *Ikmalick and Apelagliu* seem to be doing serious work, the two Inuit are openly smiling, possibly in order to convey the 'carefree' attitude of the Inuit that Ross made repeated mention of in his *Narrative*. Thus, while the field drawing and its re-presentation – like other passages in Ross's *Narrative* – both clearly testify to the geographical knowledge and skills of the Inuit, as well as the invaluable ways in which they helped Ross's expedition, there is again the suggestion of a lingering impulse to stereotype them as 'children' lacking precisely these skills and intellectual capacity. Ross's written description of Ikmalick's and Apelagliu's visit to the *Victory* ends for example in a condescending tone, with his briefest of references to the way in which the presents they had rewarded the Inuit with had 'sent them all home, happy and thankful' at least partly overwriting the appreciation he had previously expressed for their talents.⁶⁵ There is thus a lingering tension detectable in both text and image, with the smiling faces of the Inuit pictured in *Ikmalick and Apelagliu* sitting somewhat uneasily in relationship to Ross's written descriptions, which alternately refer to them as 'our new friends' while elsewhere categorising them amongst 'the lowest of mankind'.⁶⁶

Umingmak (Commander J.C. Ross, killing a musk bull)

The nineteenth plate in Ross's *Narrative*, another engraving by Brandard titled *Umingmak (Commander J.C. Ross, killing a musk bull)*, functions as an illustration

⁶⁵ Ross, 1835b, p. 260.

⁶⁶ Ross, 1835b, pp. 259-260.

for an account written by Ross's nephew, James Clark Ross, of a journey he took northward – independently of his uncle – to map an as-yet unexplored area and find out whether or not a passage existed there (**Fig. 3.18**).⁶⁷ *Umingmak* shows Ross's nephew and an Inuit hunter named Poo-yet-tah, whom he had hired as a guide, flanking their game – a musk ox that is being chased by three dogs.⁶⁸ On the left side of the composition, Ross's nephew stands near a rocky outcrop, firing his levelled hunting rifle at an onrushing musk ox. Behind the musk ox, at the right side of the composition, Poo-yet-tah chases their quarry – apparently about to throw a spear at the animal. According to Ross's *Narrative* – with the author, in this case, being of course his nephew – Poo-yet-tah was constantly missing the target and, after several attacks by gun, arrow and knife, it was Ross's nephew who finally killed the musk ox with a calmly taken shot at close range.⁶⁹

The *Narrative* informs the reader that the musk ox was at this point already rather badly wounded, having been struck by several of Poo-yet-tah's arrows and some previous shots discharged by Ross's nephew. Although the account provides some insight into the Netsilik Inuit's ways of hunting, overall it reads more like an exciting adventure story of a British officer and his 'Esquimaux' guide. With Ross's nephew acting as the protagonist, the story develops as the hunters close in upon their prey. Angered by its wounds and tiring, the desperate musk ox makes – not unlike a Spanish bullfight – a last dangerous charge for Ross's nephew, bringing the story to its climax:

the creature rushed towards me as before, to the great alarm of Poo-yet-tah, who called to me to return to the same shelter. But I had time for a cool aim; and it immediately fell, on the discharge of both barrels, but not till it was within five yards of me. The sight of his fallen enemy made my companion scream and dance with joy, and on his coming up, it was dead: one ball

⁶⁷ Ross, 1835b, 334-335, 338. There is a discrepancy between the title of this engraving as it appears in Ross's list of illustrations and on the plate itself. The title used here is that appearing on the plate rather than in the list of illustrations, which reads 'Umingmack (Commander Ross shooting a Musk Ox)'.

⁶⁸ Ross, 1835b, 350-351.

⁶⁹ Ross, 1835b, pp. 350-351.

having passed through the heart, and the other one having shattered to pieces the shoulder joint. He was lost in astonishment at the effect of the fire-arms⁷⁰

It is thus the moment of highest drama that is pictured in *Umingmak*, as well as Ross's original watercolour on which Brandard's engraving was based (**Fig. 3.19**). In addition, the text sets up a clear hierarchy, with the allegedly primitive and inefficient hunting methods used by Poo-yet-tah appearing in stark contrast to the lethal, machine-precision techniques employed by Ross's nephew. The field drawing and print can be read in much the same way, with the figures of Poo-yet-tah and Ross's nephew setting up a juxtaposition between the 'savagism' of the Inuit and the 'civilisation' of the British more broadly. Although Ross's nephew refers to Poo-yet-tah as his 'companion', his description of their hunt plays out a recurring stereotype detectable in Ross's various productions, which has the Inuit acting as children in a constant state of awe and bewilderment.⁷¹

It appears that *Umingmak* – whether the field drawing or its reproduction – was not, despite its illustrative function in Ross's *Narrative*, a simple and straightforward record of an event that had happened during his Second Voyage. The image potentially carries within it messages about race and progress that seem to predict the social Darwinism that would take hold later in the century. In this sense, it might be linked to other passages appearing in Ross's *Narrative*, which argued that the Inuit were an obsolete race:

Is it not the fate of the savage and the uncivilized of this earth to give way to the more cunning and the better informed, to knowledge and civilization? It is the order of the world, and the right one [...] All which it is our duty to provide for, is, that this event be not hastened by oppression and wrong, that it may not be attended by the suffering of individuals.⁷²

⁷⁰ Ross, 1835b, pp. 350-351.

⁷¹ Potter notes the same: 'Ross likely reflected the attitudes of most men of his class and background, and indeed what caught the fancy of the reading public was the reassurance that the "Esquimaux" was awed by the Britons, not any awe felt for the Inuit.' Potter, 2007, p. 64.

⁷² Ross, 1835b, 257.

Understanding *Umingmak* as not only an account of a hunting scene, but as a comment on the impending extinction of ‘savage’ peoples, is supported by the fact that Ross’s field drawing was, in this case, only indirectly linked – through information he received second hand – to the original event. Although Ross obviously looked to existing conventions and images by artists before him in conceiving and producing at least some of his exploration imagery, he would have had a greater need for this when drawing an event he did not witness in person.

In some ways, *Umingmak* seems reminiscent of traditional European hunting scenes. A reproduction of Philip Reinagle’s painting *Pheasant-Shooting* – engraved by Lewis and Nichols less than twenty-five years before Ross likely created his ‘image’ – is a representative example of this motif. While Reinagle’s image shows two spaniels driving a pheasant from the ground into the air and within shooting range of the hunter, in larger shooting parties beaters typically replaced dogs. Transferring the basic concept of the hunting scene to Ross’s composition in *Umingmak*, it could be that for the nineteenth-century viewer, Ross’s nephew took up the position of hunter with Poo-yet-tah becoming the dog or beater. If this was the case, such associations certainly gave an inaccurate idea of the event. Poo-yet-tah was not of course the beater driving game from its cover; he was chasing the musk ox with the intention of killing it himself. Native to the area, it was he – not Ross’s nephew – who knew where game abounded, had managed to track the musk ox and was arguably the one in charge of the hunt.

A Comparison with Cook/Webber

Together with *First Communication*, these field drawings and their reproductions in Ross’s *Narrative* can be placed within a lineage of exploration imagery, most clearly identifiable in what Smith terms ‘the official Cook/Webber visual-art programme’ for documenting interaction between explorers and natives.⁷³ Smith has grouped Webber’s ‘art programme’ into two categories of ‘event’ scenes: ‘encounter’

⁷³ Smith, 1992, p. 199. See also the first chapter of this thesis.

drawings, which usually showed Cook's first meeting with a given people, and 'entertainment' drawings, which depicted the likes of feasts, dances, rituals and sporting activities.⁷⁴

An example of a typical encounter scene from Cook's Third Voyage is Webber's field drawing of the expedition's first meeting with Maoris at Ship Cove in New Zealand in 1777 – a people Cook had in fact met on his previous voyage (**Fig. 3.20**). The majority of the composition is taken up by Webber's representation of straw shelters and Maori people, mostly seated in small groups, arranged along a sandy shoreline. In the right corner Cook, accompanied by two of his men, is shown shaking hands with a Maori chieftain; behind them the landscape opens up, revealing the arrival of some of the rest of Cook's crew in boats and, further back, two ships in the distance.

As Smith has demonstrated, Webber's image is however a complete fabrication. Although it is convincing in its representation of landscape and nature and accurate in its detailing of Maori culture – which in some ways seems to be its main concern – this is a drawing of an event that never happened: there were no Maori on the beach when Cook and his men landed, Cook did not disembark from his boat to greet a Maori chieftain, and it was not in any case, as Cook was well aware, customary to shake hands in Maori culture.⁷⁵ The reason that Webber may have constructed this falsification of history can be explained by the fact that the image was, from the outset, most likely destined for a European audience. It was important to present Cook's expedition in a favourable light, focusing attention on what Cook and Webber considered to be the overall spirit and intention of the voyage. It is therefore not historical accuracy, but – as is not surprising considering that this was in essence a sketch for what could later be worked up into a grand history painting – a type of 'higher' truth that Webber and Cook wished to convey. As with other 'encounter' and 'entertainment' drawings, the message seems to be that interactions between Cook's expedition and the various peoples they met throughout the Pacific occurred

⁷⁴ Smith, 1992, p. 73.

⁷⁵ Smith, 1992, p. 202.

‘in an atmosphere of peace and potential understanding’ – even if this was not always the case.⁷⁶ Thus, in re-presentations of events ranging from night dances in Hawaii to human sacrifice in Tahiti, Cook and a few of his men are repeatedly shown taking part in local ceremonies, amicably and openly talking with their hosts (**Figs. 3.21-2.23**).

In editing out any sign of violence and tension, Cook’s and Webber’s visual-art programme seems to have been expressive of the Enlightenment ideals that had characterised all of Cook’s voyages. At the instructions of the Royal Society, which had supported his First Voyage, Cook attempted to treat all the peoples he encountered as members of a ‘universal brotherhood of mankind’ who had, like Europeans, also been created by God. A conduit of peace and civilisation, Cook sought to handle the peoples of the Pacific with gentleness and respect – becoming the quintessential Enlightenment philanthropist through his efforts to elevate them from their ‘savage’ state. In conflicts, weapons were to be used only in self-defence and then, only as a last resort.⁷⁷ According to Smith, Cook tried to embody these aims in action; relying first and foremost on ‘his own personal courage and peaceful temperament’ when approaching a newly discovered people for the first time, Cook tended to go ‘up to them alone with gifts in his hand and a welcome on his face’.⁷⁸

Cook’s approach to dealing with Pacific peoples may have influenced the ways in which Ross chose to represent his expedition’s dealings with the Inuit. Both *First Communication* and *North Hendon* appear to present Ross as something of a Cook in the Arctic – a British officer who has put down his gun to approach an unknown people with trust, confidence and open arms. At the same time, whether due to personal motive or lack of artistic competence, Ross’s scenes – particularly the reproduction of *North Hendon* published in his *Narrative* – seem to show a stronger concern for drama, replacing the ethnographic detail of Webber’s imagery with an interest in constructing a more exciting storyline. When it comes to Ross’s other images however, there seems to be a clear departure from the ‘entertainment’

⁷⁶ Smith, 1992, p. 199.

⁷⁷ Smith, 1992, pp. 207-208.

⁷⁸ Smith, 1992, p. 238.

drawings favoured by Cook and Webber. Alongside the rest of the engravings featuring Inuit that were included in Ross's *Narrative*, neither *Ikmalick and Apelagliu* nor *Umingmak* can be classified in this way – a logical enough consequence, perhaps, of the rather different circumstances separating Cook's and Ross's voyages.

Ross was nonetheless witness to at least one event of the type that seemed to have repeatedly greeted Cook and Webber at each new landfall. His *Narrative* describes a dance performed by more than twenty of the Netsilik Inuit, followed by a vocal concert given by a group of women only, who arranged themselves in a semi-circle – singing with their eyes closed – while one of the men, Ikmalick, continued dancing in the centre.⁷⁹ While Webber almost certainly would have drawn such an event, this scene is not pictured in Ross's *Narrative* and, judging by his written account, he did not create a field drawing of this particular experience. Rather than entertainment, Ross's visual recording of his expedition's interaction with the Inuit showed activities of exploration. This basic difference suggests that Ross was not necessarily interested in the Netsilik Inuit's culture in a broader sense and that he was generally not, as the case appears to have been with Cook, intent on meeting non-Europeans on their own terms. The imagery he produced rather conveys the feeling that Ross was more concerned with how the Inuit could be and were incorporated into the expedition, and the various ways in which they were made use of by the explorers in achieving its aims. This potential shift in representation – both in terms of what seems to have been considered important to draw and what was in fact drawn – may reflect a departure from the Enlightenment ideals about the universality of humankind, which sat at the heart of Cook's voyages in the late eighteenth century.

The Appendix, October 1835

The second volume of Ross's expedition account, called the *Appendix*, contained the sweeping scientific results of his Second Voyage. Covering a number of disciplines,

⁷⁹ Ross, 1835b, p. 287.

ranging from linguistics to zoology and marine biology to philosophy, medicine and meteorology, Ross's *Appendix* included two separate chapters on Inuit peoples. The first, titled 'Sketch of the Esquimaux found in the Territory of Boothia Felix', took up a particularly prominent role: not only was it the first chapter of the entire volume, Ross – trusting that this material would be 'read with interest' – chose to illustrate it with thirteen colour lithographs of the Netsilik Inuit.⁸⁰ Based on field drawings he created in the Arctic, most likely during his first two years there, these prints were prefaced by a detailed ethnographic account that covered, across twenty-five pages, aspects of their manners, customs and social organisation, including practices of marriage, burial, adoption, childrearing, hygiene and reciprocation. The illustrations that followed, which showed either an individual, couple or small group, were each accompanied by a textual account – of between one to two pages in length – of the person or people depicted, making for a chapter of sixty pages overall. By contrast, Ross elected not to include any illustrations in his chapter on the Greenland Inuit, devoting less than ten pages of his *Appendix* to them.

Engraved by Brandard, the twenty-two Inuit sitters appearing in Ross's *Appendix* – all of whom are named – accounted for two thirds of all the plates published in that volume, with the six remaining illustrations and frontispiece being representations of Arctic fauna, terrestrial refraction, northern lights and a portrait of Ross respectively. The suggestion, then, is that Ross seems to have considered his ethnographic account of a hitherto unknown people to be one of, if not *the*, most important scientific outcome of his Second Voyage. Already in the Preface to his *Appendix*, Ross drew his reader's attention to his first 'article' on the 'Esquimaux' he had 'discovered in Boothia Felix' and 'named Boothians'. Placing emphasis on the illustrations in particular, Ross rather notably referred to these as 'portraits', explaining that their function was meant to be both physiognomic and ethnographic – in his words, 'colour, features, and costume'.⁸¹

⁸⁰ Ross, 1835a, p. ix.

⁸¹ Ross, 1835a, p. ix.

From the outset, Ross hinted at a relationship between his account of the Netsilik Inuit and the emerging life sciences of the nineteenth century, particularly those concerned with the study of ‘savages’ such as phrenology and comparative anatomy. This overlap was confirmed in the opening pages of his ‘Sketch’ that followed, which claimed that the plates and their accompanying texts sufficiently covered the ‘stature, forms, and physiognomy’ as well as the ‘dresses’ of the Netsilik Inuit, rendering additional commentary on these subjects unnecessary.⁸² From here, Ross argued for the ‘purity’ of the Netsilik Inuit. Establishing them as amongst ‘the narrowest and most insulated tribe of men that has yet been discovered by navigators’, he went to great lengths – despite some evidence to the contrary – to prove the almost total lack of external influences or knowledge about other cultures, whether European, Inuit or otherwise, on their own.⁸³

entirely unacquainted with Europeans [...and] Thus ignorant of civilized society, they were equally unacquainted with the warlike tribes of America; whether those of their own race, or the races which are included under the general term Indians. The peculiar insulation of the tract to which they confine themselves, is not only the cause of this, but is likely to operate henceforward, without interruption.⁸⁴

It seems Ross’s point with all of this was to certify that the Netsilik Inuit were and would remain an ideal object of study, and that the data he collected about them in the field would give invaluable insight into the ‘original’ state of humankind and, perhaps more importantly, ‘the Esquimaux race’ in particular. Other scientists could then use Ross’s finds to shed light on processes of degeneration, for example, or add knowledge about an earlier stage of human development. Whatever the aim, the Netsilik Inuit were in the logic of early nineteenth-century thinking a perfect, unadulterated sample or specimen through which to isolate and research questions

⁸² Ross, 1835a, pp. 1-2.

⁸³ Ross, 1835a, p. 3. Here, Ross himself noted that the Netsilik Inuit already possessed a couple of European items, a fact which obviously suggested contact with other Inuit and, through them at the very least, prior knowledge of the existence of Europeans. His *Narrative* complicated things further, recounting at least two instances when he had shown the Netsilik Inuit ‘engravings of the natives who had been known and drawn in the preceding voyages’; on both occasions, they had expressed clear familiarity with the people depicted. Ross, 1835b, p. 260.

⁸⁴ Ross, 1835a, p. 2.

surrounding the intellectual development and capacity of living ‘savages’. It is in precisely these contexts that Ross appears to have offered his ‘Sketch’ – both text and image – to readers of his *Appendix*:

Here, if any where, we ought therefore to find how the human mind is developed under the narrowest of education, in what manner the “light of nature” [...] operates on the moral character and conduct, and how far human reason can proceed [...] what belongs to the original mental constitution of these people, and what is derived from their narrow and limited intercourse with their own species, in a society so restricted in number, and so incapable of changing customs or altering habits, where there is nothing beyond themselves to see, and no one to imitate.⁸⁵

Ross’s interest in questions concerning the development of the human mind, and of the mental character of the Netsilik Inuit specifically, is perhaps unsurprising given his background in phrenology. Ross was apparently familiar with the work of Gall and Spurzheim already some time before its introduction to Scotland in 1816.⁸⁶

Although this early exposure to their theories – which is said to have happened in Paris – had not made him an immediate convert to the discipline, Ross was nonetheless struck by the similarities between their thinking and observations he had been making independently at the time.⁸⁷ According to a recent biography, Ross drew ‘hundreds of sketches of seamen’ during his early career and, after his initial introduction to phrenology, found that his sketches corroborated its principles – the head shapes documented in his sketches and sometimes, accompanying notes, seemed to correspond with certain psychological characteristics.⁸⁸

On 1 May 1823, three years after its establishment, Ross joined the Edinburgh Phrenological Society as a ‘corresponding member’.⁸⁹ That same month, he wrote to the society’s founder, informing Combe about work he was doing with ‘Irish Heads’ at the time.⁹⁰ Over the next few years, Ross seems to have been rather involved in the society’s activities – he recruited new members, acquired for examination the head

⁸⁵ Ross, 1835a, p. 3.

⁸⁶ Carmichael, 1833, pp. 15, 17.

⁸⁷ Ross, 1994, p. 111.

⁸⁸ Ross, 1994, p. 111.

⁸⁹ *Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* 1826 (1825), p. 477.

⁹⁰ NLS MS 7211, f. 29 Ross, 20 May 1823.

of at least one convict and, even submitted a minimum of two articles for publication in its quarterly journal, *The Phrenological Journal and Miscellany*.⁹¹ In addition, Ross independently published a phrenological treatise on naval discipline, most likely based on his earlier and perhaps ongoing study of sailors under his command.⁹² On top of all this, there is even the suggestion that Ross may have set up some sort of phrenological practice, serving people who wanted to check their intellectual, emotional and social character, or that of other family members.⁹³

Arctic exploration was fully caught up in the work of Ross's fellow phrenologists, who frequently used in their research the descriptions of 'savage' peoples found in exploration and travel accounts. An article published in the society's journal in 1824, for example, mined Franklin's account of his First Overland Expedition for phrenological data that might support the author's ideas about topics ranging from the differences between English and Orkney seamen's 'organs of Cautiousness' to the character of various indigenous and 'mixed' peoples of Arctic Canada – including the large organs of 'Constructiveness, Secretiveness, and Imitation' allegedly found amongst the Inuit.⁹⁴ In a two-part article published in the same journal in 1833, Robert Cox made similar use of Arctic expedition accounts to substantiate his theories 'On the Character and Cerebral Development of the Esquimaux'.⁹⁵ Turning to a broad selection of sources including comparisons of Inuit and Papuan skulls and texts by Spurzheim and Gall, Cox used the 'rotundity of visage' consistently depicted in engravings featured in accounts by Lyon, Parry,

⁹¹ NLS MS 7214, f. 20 Ross, 2 April 1823. At least one of these articles was published as 'Captain Ross on Decimal Notation of the Organs' in 1824. An anonymous article of 1825 entitled 'Essay On the Female Character' may also be attributable to Ross. See Ross, 1994, p. 111; Ross, 1824. *Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* 1825b.

⁹² This work was not very well received by other members of the society. A review of Ross's treatise credited him 'for his zeal and good intentions' but ultimately criticised his work for 'a want both of good sense and knowledge of our science in some of his observations'. *Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* 1825a, p. 475.

⁹³ Ross performed 'phrenological deductions of the cerebral development' of at least four living European individuals between 1826 and 1849, indicating that his number of clients was, in all likelihood, rather low. SPRI MS 486/6/1-22 Ross, 1826-1849.

⁹⁴ *Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* 1824, pp. 275, 280-281.

⁹⁵ Cox, 1834 (1833)-a; Cox, 1834 (1833)-b.

Ross and Frederick William Beechey to argue – among other claims – that ‘Esquimaux’ from Greenland and across Canada to the Bering Strait showed clear signs of a ‘lymphatic constitution’.⁹⁶

Thus, while there was clearly an interest in and demand for data from the Arctic, Ross’s colleagues in the Edinburgh Phrenological Society apparently desired more. It seems that at least some phrenologists thought explorers were not making the most out of the excellent opportunities for research that, to their minds, were being presented by the Arctic. The author of the 1824 article that had made use of Franklin’s expedition account articulated this position through a telling mixture of regret and criticism that effectively labelled Franklin’s expedition little more than a lost opportunity:

they were placed in an enviable situation [...] They possessed opportunities of observing tribes very little removed from the condition of primitive nature, and not as mere passengers through their territory, but as sojourners among them [...] our present duty, therefore, shall be limited to pointing out how much more might have been gained had they been initiated into the doctrines of our science; and we hope hereby to induce future travellers to avail themselves of its aids.⁹⁷

Only five years later, Ross set sail for the Arctic – perhaps with the ambition to remedy this situation. It is not an unlikely assumption, especially considering that Ross’s Second Voyage followed what appears to have been his most active years of engagement in the phrenological community in Scotland. In any case, Ross’s keen enthusiasm for phrenology – and his dedication to the society – certainly travelled with him to the Arctic in 1829. This is directly evidenced in his *Appendix*, wherein Ross describes how he seized upon the opportunity presented to him by the death of an elderly Inuit named Alictu to ‘procure’ an ‘Esquimaux’ skull. Eager to obtain such a valuable specimen of natural history, Ross – together with the ship’s surgeon – broke into the igloo in which Alictu was buried in order to dismember and steal his head. Ross had intended to give this ‘find’ to the Phrenological Society and, although he had to leave it behind when forced to abandon his vessel at Victoria Harbour,

⁹⁶ Cox, 1834 (1833)-a, p. 294.

⁹⁷ *Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* 1824, pp. 274-275.

Ross nonetheless took care to preserve a sample of Alictu's hair and transport this back to Britain.⁹⁸ During the same phase of his expedition, Ross also produced at least twenty-one full-length field drawings of Inuit individuals. It is in precisely this context that these 'images', together with their reproductions and accompanying textual descriptions in Ross's *Appendix*, should initially be understood.

Ross's 'Portraits' of the Netsilik Inuit

Ross most likely produced all his field drawings of Inuit individuals between January 1830 and the autumn of 1831, the time period during which his expedition was in contact with the Netsilik Inuit. Created in a separate category to that of the 'event' scenes that went on to inform some of the illustrations in his *Narrative*, Ross's twenty-one 'portraits' were all composed using a repeating template: each 'image' shows one sitter, standing in full-length, facing forward. Dressed in Inuit clothing, Ross's sitters are placed on backgrounds that give little or no description of the surrounding environment. Revealing strong similarities with representations of non-Western peoples from previous centuries and costume book imagery more broadly, Ross's 'images' clearly link to the ethnographic convention. This formulaic approach to representation suggests that Ross conceived and produced his field drawings for the explicit purpose of scientific research – perhaps, in addition to his own uses, with the intention of supplying data to scientists back home.

Some obvious alterations were made to Ross's 'images' as they were turned into lithographs and published in his *Appendix* about four years later: backgrounds were added, and the individuals featured in the field drawings were often grouped together. The reasons for such changes seem, in the first instance, to have been straightforward enough. In addition to emphasising the notion that Ross had studied the Netsilik Inuit in their natural 'habitat', the more elaborate though still generalised Arctic surroundings appearing in most of the engravings, whether icy landscapes or igloo interiors, were probably added to make the 'portraits' more accessible and

⁹⁸ Ross, 1835a, p. 28.

interesting to the common reader.⁹⁹ The combining together of individuals into couples or groups may have similarly increased the visual interest of the prints for Ross's readers, although there may have been an even more practical rationale in this case – fewer prints of course meant lower production costs. On the other hand, Ross's seemingly haphazard gathering together of people – in several engravings the individuals were not related or otherwise clearly linked – may reflect his experience of the Netsilik Inuit's comparatively more fluid social organisation: for example adoption, polygamy, spouse exchange, collective hunting and food sharing across and beyond the immediate family.¹⁰⁰

The way in which the prints were composed is easy enough to reconstruct from Ross's field drawings. The particular messages and meanings the resulting representations were meant to convey are another matter, however. In the case *Illictu and Otoogiu*, which is the fifth print illustrating Ross's *Appendix*, the individual figures appearing separately in two of Ross's field drawings are in effect collaged together, placed – still standing in the same postures and holding the exact same items in their hands – at the edge of a lake in an autumn landscape scattered with small towers of stone (**Figs. 3.24-3.26**). This background matches the opening paragraph of Ross's two-page description for this plate, which suggests that Ross's intention was to present ethnographic information about the Netsilik Inuit's methods for hunting reindeer:

Illictu and Otoogiu. Are represented standing at the pool of Shagavoke, where both salmon and reindeer are killed in the autumn; the piles of stones are erected by the natives, for the purpose of preventing the reindeer from passing along the shore when they wish to drive them into the pool. A man or a dog being sent among them make all to appear moving, which alarms the animals and causes them to take the water; where they are attacked and killed by men in canoes.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ There is one exception: *Ooblooria, Paningavoke, Amingo and Nullingiaki* shows an Inuit family inside the Victory's cabin, thus recalling the print titled *Ikmalick and Apelagliu* featuring in Ross's *Narrative*.

¹⁰⁰ Damas, 1972, pp. 221-222; Damas, 1975, pp. 410-413.

¹⁰¹ Ross, 1835a, p. 31.

Hunting and fishing do not seem to have been Ross's real interest, however, with the remainder of this text, like the plate it describes, having nothing more to do with the contents of this brief introductory passage. The choice to combine Illictu and Otoogiu together, like the inclusion of a lakeshore with piled stones, seems altogether random.

As with all the plates and their accompanying texts in the *Appendix*, it appears that Ross's intention with *Illictu and Otoogiu* was to present physical and behavioural traits of the Netsilik Inuit in as 'scientific' a manner as possible. If Ross used a repeating format for his images, he was similarly formulaic in his approach to writing. Following the introduction of each new name to his text – unless the person appears in one of the other plates in the *Appendix* – Ross systematically provided height and a brief note on appearance:

Otoogiu was five feet three inches and five-eighths high, inclining to corpulency, his face broad [...] His wife's name was Kuauga, who had two children; she was five feet three inches and a quarter high and rather good looking [...] Illictu, the son of Kunaua was a very fine lad about fifteen years of age, five feet six inches high.¹⁰²

This basic data, which reveals hints of a phrenological mindset in its use of adjectives in particular, is incorporated within a narrative writing style that presents anecdotes about the individuals pictured and serves, in conjunction with the plate, to document the 'savage' condition of the Netsilik Inuit. What appear at first glance in the plate to be signifiers of the Netsilik Inuit's material culture are in some cases visual coding devices that reinforce notions promoted in Ross's text about their alleged inclination – like other 'savage' peoples – toward stealing and superstition amongst other things:

Otoogiu is represented with the magnifying lens which he had stolen in one hand, and a knife made of bone in the other [...] At that moment he had suspended to his neck a small phial containing an emulsion which the

¹⁰² Ross, 1835a, pp. 31-32.

surgeon had given to him six months before, which instead of taking inwardly, as intended, was hung to his neck as a charm.¹⁰³

The other twelve lithographs link to Ross's text in much the same way. The print titled *Nimna Himna* for example, which serves as something of a frontispiece for Ross's sixty-page 'Sketch' of the Netsilik Inuit, receives its explanation in Ross's description of a later plate showing her daughter Kemig. As with *Illictu and Otoogiu*, the figure in one of Ross's field drawings again appears to have been directly transposed onto a fully worked up backdrop of land and sky (**Fig. 3.27, 3.28**). However, Ross does not comment on the landscape this time, moving directly to anecdotes about Nimna Himna's behaviour and a description of her physical appearance and disposition:

nicknamed by the sailors, Old Greedy, as well as herself, was a constant visitor to the ship, and generally carried off something which she had picked up [...] She was about sixty years of age, five feet two inches high, extremely ill-looking, and decidedly the most disgusting of the whole tribe.¹⁰⁴

While this text continues notions about the Netsilik Inuit's supposed propensity for thieving, as is articulated elsewhere throughout his 'Sketch', Ross's account of Nimna Himna's daughter introduced a further stereotype about the 'Esquimaux' – laziness and, possibly, sexual promiscuity.

Titled *Kemig*, the lithograph – for which no field drawing seems to have survived – shows a woman sitting on a bed inside an igloo, naked from the waist up (**Fig. 3.29**). The decision to represent Kemig in this way reveals a heightened interest in body and face, although Ross claims in his text that his primary aim in drawing Kemig was simply ethnographic – that is, to record the tattoos covering the cheeks, chin, neck, shoulders and arms of 'all' Netsilik Inuit women. But, as before, Ross's text quickly moves on to the task of communicating data that seems to have been of a more phrenological nature:

¹⁰³ Ross, 1835a, p. 32. Though not evidenced in the plate, Ross also promoted stereotypes about the Inuit as gluttons, writing of Illictu that 'he demonstrated that he was very fond of fresh beef, and that he could eat without being satiated for one whole day'.

¹⁰⁴ Ross, 1835a, pp. 41-42.

This young woman, who was the most corpulent of the whole tribe [...] was five feet four inches and a quarter high, and was about twenty-five years of age [...] Her skin was a dirty copper colour, her face was broad, her brow very low, her eyes, nose, and mouth small, and her cheeks very red. She seemed very indolent¹⁰⁵

Although the degree to which nineteenth-century readers of Ross's *Appendix* would have associated an image of a half-naked 'savage' with sexual promiscuity is difficult to establish with certainty, other texts and images appearing in his 'Sketch' were somewhat clearer on the subject – and it is in this broader context that *Kemig* would most likely have been understood.

The ninth and fourteenth plates in Ross's *Appendix* take up more explicitly the sexual and marital customs of the Netsilik Inuit and, unlike in *Illicitu and Otoogiu*, the grouping together of individuals here follows a clear logic.¹⁰⁶ The first of the two plates, titled *Poyettak, Kakikagiu, and Aknalua*, shows a woman – who appears separately in a field drawing – flanked by her two male partners, while the second print, titled *Udlia, Awtigin, and Palurak*, gives the inverse (**Figs. 3.30, 3.31**). The texts Ross provided alongside both prints again systematically comment on details of age, height, skin-colour, sizes and proportions of various face and bodily features and overall character of each individual pictured. Although the anecdotes Ross recounted in addition to such data conveyed some idea about the marital arrangements between these individuals, the twenty-five pages preceding the plates gave a fuller explanation of the seemingly loose sexual relationships practiced by the Netsilik Inuit generally. Ross approached this subject with a rather open mind, but his attempt to neutrally cover their 'forms of matrimony' and 'want of chastity' ultimately left no doubt about how far removed the Netsilik Inuit were, in his opinion, from all notions of civilisation: 'The conduct of the present people, as of all the rest of this race, is not more pure than that of the brute beasts: it is far less so than that of the pairing animals. But I need not dwell on a disgusting and improper subject'.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵ Ross, 1835a, p. 41.

¹⁰⁶ The added background remains, by contrast, completely arbitrary.

¹⁰⁷ Ross, 1835a, pp. 8-9.

Here, as in the several references to laziness and stealing found throughout his *Appendix*, Ross was not simply repeating claims made by other Arctic explorers; he appears to have been drawing on and adding to current phrenological discussions about the mental character and attributes of the Inuit.¹⁰⁸ Published about two years before Ross's *Appendix*, Cox's writings on the Inuit for the Edinburgh Phrenological Society, as briefly touched on already, discussed at length the Inuit's supposed 'constitutional laziness', 'dishonest and thievish dispositions', 'sexual propensity' and 'mutual infidelity'.¹⁰⁹

The extent to which the plates in Ross's *Appendix* in fact supported these notions is of course debatable. If it were indeed Ross's aim to categorise the Netsilik Inuit according to the principles of phrenological thinking at the time, then the representational mode he chose to employ in his 'images' and their eventual re-presentations in his *Appendix* seems somewhat out of step with this scientific ambition. In addition to Ross's obvious limitations as an artist, the heads of the figures in all of Ross's images are very small, making it generally difficult for the viewer to take note of any facial details. It seems that a more logical approach would have been to use head and bust portraits – a representational mode present already in the visual material resulting from Cook's voyages and, also, images produced by other Arctic explorers in the decade before Ross set sail on his Second Voyage. An 1819 print attributed to Andrew M. Skene titled *Marshuick and Meigack* for example, which was in fact included in Ross's narrative of his First Voyage, uses a two-angled view that gives a much clearer study of the facial features and head shapes of the two Inughuit men depicted – although their hoods do of course get in the way (**Fig. 3.32**). An 1824 engraving of Lyon's *Takkeelikkeeta – an Esquimaux of Igloodik* published in Parry's account of his Second Voyage similarly conveys far more detailed information concerning the face and head of the sitter (**Fig. 3.33**). Like these, an engraving based on some of George Back's field drawings that was featured in Franklin's 1828 narrative of his Second Overland Expedition combines

¹⁰⁸ Ross, 1835a, pp. 32, 42, 51, 59.

¹⁰⁹ Cox, 1834 (1833)-a, pp. 295, 296, 301.

together on a single page four head and bust portraits, one of which is in profile, of Inuit men of varying ages (**Fig. 3.34**).

Comparing these illustrations to any one of Ross's field drawings or their reproductions in his *Appendix* questions whether Ross's images were, particularly on their own, of any actual value to early nineteenth-century phrenologists. This is not to say that Ross's images were entirely un-scientific – rather, it may be more accurate to understand them as reflecting the somewhat confusing overlaps between ethnography, comparative anatomy, phrenology and physiognomy that were characteristic of the time.

Ross's apparent decision to employ the ethnographic convention suggests that he was attempting to arrive at an objective representation of the Inuit 'type'. On the surface, his 'images' of the Netsilik Inuit have a clear visual equivalence to his drawings of Arctic fauna, some of which were also published in his *Appendix*, indicating that they too – like foxes, hares, musk oxen and fish – were a natural 'specimen' of the region (**Fig. 3.35**). While their capacity to function fully as phrenological records seems doubtful, they do succeed in conveying – as may be expected of the ethnographic convention – information about the dress and adornment of men and women of different ages. At the same time, Ross's images do not straightforwardly adhere to the standard language of the ethnographic convention, which would normally simply dress up classically proportioned figures in Inuit clothing. Field drawings of two women named Shullanina and Kakikagiu for example reveal an obvious attempt to capture the body types, features and proportions that were meant to be typical for the Netsilik Inuit generally (**Figs. 3.36, 3.37**). In addition to this attempt at articulating ethnic difference, Ross's 'images' significantly depart from the regular workings of the ethnographic convention by including visual signifiers of the presence of the explorers. As with the magnifying lens held by Otoogiu that has been discussed previously, Ross's field drawings of Tulluahiu and Tirikshiu – a husband and wife who in fact appear frequently in Ross's *Narrative* – both depict objects that have nothing to do with Netsilik Inuit material culture, but instead reference specific interactions between these two Inuit and

Ross's expedition (**Figs. 3.6, 3.38**). In this way, Tulluahiu's wooden leg – which was made and fitted for him by the expedition's carpenter – and the piece of wood Tirikshiu holds behind her – which she tried to steal from Ross's ship – seem to openly declare that these are not objective representations of scientific 'specimens' but subjective, personally involved portrayals of distinct and identifiable individuals.¹¹⁰

Ross's decision to label the resulting reproductions of his field drawings 'portraits', and to title these with personal names, reveals a similar impulse to present each figure as a person rather than a type. It would seem, then, that Ross was caught somewhat awkwardly between two conflicting desires – the collection and presentation of scientific data on the one hand and the telling and illustrating of stories on the other. When considering the plates in Ross's *Appendix* in the context in which they were presented, this seeming tension between science and narrative is only further heightened. As with the engravings alone, the texts Ross wrote about the illustrations of the Netsilik Inuit featured in his *Appendix* continuously reclaim the 'specimens' they describe and measure as unique personalities. Although Ross's intention with his anecdotes was most likely to communicate – through in-depth knowledge that could only be acquired in the field – ideas about the mental capacity and character of the Inuit more broadly, his narrative interludes seem to repeatedly transform these individuals from 'samples' that might stand in for the Inuit 'race' at large into active participants and recognisable figures in the history of exploration.

Comparison with Lyon

The engravings of the Netsilik Inuit appearing in Ross's *Appendix* can of course be situated within explorer imagery of Inuit more broadly. Prints based on a number of field drawings executed by Lyon in the Arctic during an 1821-1823 expedition under Parry's command, and which were published in Parry's *Journal of a Second Voyage*,

¹¹⁰ Ross, 1835b, p. 254; Ross, 1835a, p. 51.

make for a particularly interesting comparison.¹¹¹ Published five years before Ross embarked on his Second Voyage, the reproductions of Lyon's 'images' document various aspects of Inuit culture as observed by Parry's expedition while spending time amongst a group of Inuit living just south of the Netsilik Inuit that Ross subsequently encountered. Like the Netsilik Inuit, the people with whom Parry's expedition interacted, while similarly living in close proximity over an extended period of time, were a hunter-gatherer society with a subsistence economy based primarily on seal, fish and reindeer. Despite these overlaps, Ross's and Lyon's representations of Inuit peoples are very different, perhaps suggesting that they were not interested in the Inuit for the same reasons and, furthermore, that the reproductions of the images they produced in the Arctic served different functions.

Overall, the engravings of Inuit featured in Parry's narrative seem to have a far more distinct ethnographic or documentary quality about them: the detailed and close-up black and white prints suggest their intention was to capture and convey objective and dispassionate information about the Inuit culture Parry's expedition met with on Melville Peninsula, Winter Island and Igloolik in the early 1820s. Unlike the illustrations in Ross's *Appendix*, all of the reproductions based on Lyon's 'images' appearing in Parry's narrative display great attention to detail. In the print titled *An Esquimaux Watching a Seal*, for example, the texture of the hunter's clothing and the particulars of his weapon, with the rope extending from the end of the harpoon to his left hand, are all clearly expressed. The way the hunter is lying on the ice with his hood on and harpoon in his right hand and with his body almost taking the shape of a seal implies that Lyon paid close attention to these specific movements (**Fig. 3.39**). Three other images – *An Esquimaux Watching a Seal Hole*, *An Esquimaux Listening at a Seal Hole* and *Esquimaux Killing Deer in a Lake* – give similarly detailed descriptions of the various hunting methods employed by this group of Inuit (**Figs. 3.40-3.42**).

This apparent interest in ethnographic detail is continued in two engravings showing igloos (**Figs. 3.43 and 3.44**). In addition to rather accurately depicting the distinct

¹¹¹ Parry, 1824a.

look of these shelters, *Esquimaux Building a Snow-hut* and *An Esquimaux Creeping into the Passage of a Snow-hut* clearly explain to the viewer their size, function and construction. In the latter illustration for example, the human figure in front of the igloo serves to provide an obvious marker of scale. Placed in front of the entrance, the figure further reveals how the igloo is organised – that the smaller of the two hemispheric volumes is the entrance, and that the Inuit crawl through this volume to reach the main part of the construction. The other engraving complements this scene by showing how igloos are built and with which tools.

In addition to their respective levels of detail – and by extension readability – another marked distinction between the reproductions of Lyon's and Ross's field drawings is the way in which they include or exclude the presence of British explorers.

Alongside the items introduced into to Netsilik Inuit society by Ross's expedition, whether as gifts or 'stolen' objects, some of the engravings in his *Appendix* – such as *Kawalua*, *Tiagashu*, and *Adlurak* – include rather large Union Jacks, and in this case a waving figure, placed upon hill tops in the distance (**Fig. 3.45**).¹¹² By contrast, the images of Inuit people pictured in Parry's expedition account barely, and only sometimes at that, show traces of a British presence. When the engravings based on Lyon's drawings do include references to British explorers, this is always done discreetly – usually, as in *An Esquimaux Watching a Seal*, through a sailing vessel positioned on the distant horizon. Parry and his expedition were not, in other words, meant to be part of the visual presentation of the Inuit.

A final difference between the illustrations appearing in Ross's *Appendix* and Parry's narrative is of course the way in which the engravings are titled. Instead of the personal names Ross assigned to the reproductions of his 'images', Parry's labelling of the prints based on Lyon's field drawings render the Inuit pictured completely anonymous – the obvious message is that these illustrations show activities common to all the Inuit his expedition encountered. Like the extreme detail of the prints and their lack of a British presence, Parry's approach to naming these illustrations

¹¹² Another example, previously discussed, is *Illictu and Otoogiu*.

suggests that they are meant to be read as purely descriptive, scientific records independent of time and the actions of unique individuals.

As is evidenced by Ross's and Parry's texts, they – and Lyon – certainly experienced many of the same things during their respective times spent amongst separate Inuit societies. Yet, while the reproductions based on Lyon's field drawings seem to stand as convincing proof of an extended period of interaction with the Inuit and close observation of their culture, they at the same time maintain a somewhat artificial façade. The suggestion inherent to this body of work is that the Inuit were always kept at an objective distance from the explorers, and that Lyon remained authoritatively in control in planning and producing his documentation of their lifestyle and customs. The people populating Lyon's scenes remain neutral figures without individual stories, histories and personalities and the overarching emphasis is not so much on them as discovered 'specimens' as it is on capturing and conveying a range of cultural practices common to this given Inuit society.

Ross does something of the inverse in his *Appendix*. In employing the ethnographic convention, which comes across far more statically than the dynamic scenes found in the reproductions of Lyon's drawings, Ross by contrast seems to have been most concerned with capturing the Inuit as 'samples' of a 'savage' people living in extreme isolation. His interest does not seem to have been in Inuit culture more broadly, or in the ways in which they actually inhabited and survived in the Arctic. However, the 'type' images published in his *Appendix* refuse to fully accept the driving logic of their representational framework. His figures begin emerging as unique individuals fully bound up in his narrative of exploration and discovery, thus challenging the idea that Ross had been able to separate between himself and the Inuit or remain at a distance from which he might simply observe them. In this sense the presentation of Inuit in Ross's *Appendix* was somehow more honest than Lyon's, as they express the proximity that very much existed between the Inuit and explorers and, perhaps to a lesser extent, the ways in which the successes of the latter relied very much on the former – not on an anonymous Inuit 'race' but on the specific actions and attitudes of known individuals. At the same time, Ross's 'portraits' of

these individuals are shot through with stereotypes about their ‘savage’ behaviour and customs that attempt to deny them parity with the explorers.

Ross’s Second Voyage: A Unified View of the Arctic?

Overall, this chapter’s discussion of the visual material connected to Ross’s Second Voyage suggests that this body of work, despite having been produced and managed primarily by Ross over a limited enough period of time, contained internal contradictions and a range of competing influences. While Ross’s ambition may have been to present to the British public a unified view of the Arctic, reading across and between the chapter’s three case studies reveals that the end result was a somewhat fractured whole. On the one hand, Ross obviously wanted to celebrate his expedition’s achievements, especially his own prowess as an Arctic explorer, scientist and leader, most likely in a bid to prove that his expedition had not been a failure and, by extension, to recover his lost reputation. To this end, the Inuit served in some cases as a foil, with their ‘primitive’ means and ‘backwards’ ways drawing attention to Ross’s superiority. On the other hand, Ross’s multi-media representation of the Arctic repeatedly acknowledged the Inuit as participants in, rather than discoveries of, exploration. This suggests that the presence of Arctic peoples in narratives of exploration and discovery inherently complicated the construction and maintenance of a unified discourse. While certainly stereotyped, the Inuit included in Ross’s popular exhibitions, *Narrative* and *Appendix* seem to resist attempts at silencing them completely.

In fact, although this chapter has primarily pointed to the ways in which Ross positioned the Netsilik Inuit’s culture in a clearly inferior status to his own, his attitude towards them tended to shift and was, at times, rather more positive than that of at least some of his contemporaries. As has been evidenced already in select instances throughout his popular exhibitions, *Narrative* and *Appendix*, isolated passages of text in both volumes of Ross’s expedition account seem to peculiarly work against his overarching portrayal of the Netsilik Inuit as ‘savages’ prone to

childish, immoral and animal-like behaviour. Writing in his *Narrative* for example, Ross states how he and his men could ‘easily see that their appearance was very superior to our own; being at least as well clothed, and far better fed’.¹¹³ Ross goes on to complement his account of this ‘acute-minded people’ in his *Appendix*, adjusting the claims made by previous Arctic explorers – as well as himself – by arguing that the Inuit he had met with were not selfish, thievish, cruel and lazy.¹¹⁴

We did not observe any propensity to falsehood, or disposition to deceive; and, on every occasion, there seemed a desire to communicate all the information in their power, while, as far as we examined, this also proved correct. It was on the same principle, that we could always trust their promises; there was the “point of honour” engaged; and on the only occasion on which they broke one, in not keeping an appointment as guides, they long after accused themselves of “being very bad” for not giving notice; though, to have done so, would have been to lose a day of their hunting when they were without provisions.¹¹⁵

While this certainly seems to be a positive portrayal, within the next few sentences Ross had already begun working in the opposite direction, attempting to separate himself from the Netsilik Inuit by sorting and categorising them into a lower form of humanity. It was here that the Netsilik Inuit ultimately remained in Ross’s varied representations of them – as ‘savages’, albeit virtuous ones.¹¹⁶ It nonetheless seems that Ross’s experience of living in close proximity to and regularly co-operating with the Netsilik Inuit caused him to at least partly question dominant assumptions about the supposedly ‘savage’ state of Inuit peoples generally.

Direct interactions between British and Inuit individuals were primarily, but not exclusively, contained within the Arctic. Although the explorers’ perception of Inuit and the retellings of the observations they made in the field were the most common channel through which a wider public was exposed to the Inuit and their ways of life,

¹¹³ Ross, 1835b, p. 245.

¹¹⁴ Ross, 1835a, pp. 5, 12-13, 16, 18, 20.

¹¹⁵ Ross, 1835a, p. 18.

¹¹⁶ ‘considering the mild dispositions of this race in general, and the circumstances in which they are placed in this narrow community and district. May I not say that it is a good one, and that the man of these lands may be considered a “virtuous savage?”’ Ross, 1835a, p. 18.

there were a few occasions throughout the nineteenth century when the typical scenario of the explorer meeting the Inuit in their native environment was, if not completely inverted, somewhat different. Linking to a long tradition for bringing back ‘native’ peoples to Europe from the New World, Africa and the Pacific, typically as curiosities and sometimes as cultural-political emissaries, Arctic explorers and whalers in the nineteenth century occasionally returned to Britain – as Frobisher had done in the sixteenth – with Inuit individuals onboard. Unlike the majority of living ‘savages’ that came to Europe in this time period, the Inuit that arrived in Britain were typically not exhibited in ‘freak’ shows. Thus while most Inuit remained little more than fictions to the British public through the multiple explorer narratives and popular exhibitions in which they circulated, there were rare instances when Inuit and British individuals may have formed alternative relationships, at least partly removed from the context of exploration. Not only was the field of interaction shifted from remote hunter-gatherer settlements to urban centres, the Arctic explorer was possibly replaced by a far broader segment of British society.

Turning from Ross’s Second Voyage back to high-art painting, the next chapter focuses on precisely these issues, using professionally painted portraits of Hans Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq – two Inuit men that were brought separately back to Britain in the 1810s and 1850s – to question whether these unique instances of contact may have resulted in alternative representations of Inuit to those found in explorer images and their reproductions. One obvious difference is the technical skill of the artist – the outcome being, on the surface at least, a more convincing and intimate portrayal of the sitters. In effect, Ross’s static and somewhat caricature-like drawings of Inuit – or for that matter the figures in Lyon’s more detailed and believable ethnographic scenes – are turned into living individuals with personalities and stories of their own hinted at already in their facial expressions.

Analysing these two portraits and the historical, social and biographical contexts in which they occurred overlaps on several levels with this chapter’s discussion of the visual material resulting from Ross’s Second Voyage. The next chapter extends for

example the relationship between representations of Inuit and the new scientific thinking about race that gained increasing currency throughout the first half of the nineteenth century. Building on this chapter's discussion of the sometimes ambiguous relationships between 'type' and 'portrait' representations, the analysis that follows investigates this tension further, with the question of voice – that is, the degree to which Inuit individuals represented by British artists may have influenced or had a say in the ways in which they were portrayed – becoming a more central concern. Another linkage between this chapter and the next involves the problems posed to art historical analysis by fragmentary sources. Arriving at an understanding of the ways in which Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq may have experienced and interacted with British society is, like the reconstruction of nineteenth-century popular exhibitions, a task filled with guesswork. With Ross's popular exhibitions, *Narrative* and *Appendix* having identified some stereotypes about Arctic peoples, the following chapter proceeds by finding within two professional portraits of Inuit hints of engaging personal stories that perhaps ran counter to dominant discourses of the time.

Chapter 4: Inuit Portraiture

This chapter addresses the question of whether there was a unified view of the Arctic during the period connected to Britain's search for a Northwest Passage from 1818 to 1859 by examining high-art paintings of two Greenland Inuit men: Alexander Nasmyth's portrait of Hans Zakæus, also known as John Sakeouse, painted in Edinburgh in about 1818; and a portrait of Qalasirssuaq, also known as Erasmus Augustine Kallihirua, painted in England sometime between 1851 and 1855 by an unknown artist. Taking these portraits as its frame of reference, the chapter discusses a broad selection of historical documents and ephemera connected to both men – including expedition accounts, letters of correspondence and newspaper articles – in an attempt to establish the terms and circumstances of their interaction with British society both in the Arctic and in Britain. In doing so, the chapter begins by pointing to the existence of marginalised or almost untold stories in the historiography of Arctic exploration that both intersect with and call into question the well-known narratives of nineteenth-century explorers circulating at present in scholarship and popular culture alike. Situated at either end of the period 1818 to 1859, these two portraits appear to represent very different approaches to painting non-Western individuals – a 'wild' but 'virtuous savage' in native dress on the one hand, and a 'civilised savage' in Western clothing on the other. Both reveal, if to varying degrees, an ambiguity between the genres of personal portraiture and ethnographic image, with the later of the two paintings suggesting a shift in thinking toward a hierarchical and increasingly divided, race-based understanding of the variety and make-up of humankind. Nonetheless, each portrait gives fleeting evidence of the possible workings of a 'contact zone' and/or 'middle ground' in relationship to

which the sitters or their painters may have had the opportunity to work alongside, outside of or even against prevailing ideas about Arctic peoples and living ‘savages’ more broadly.

Mapping out the separate circumstances that led to Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq having been painted in Britain, the chapter begins with a brief biography of both men, foreshadowing already from the outset the very different meanings potentially conveyed by each portrait. These biographies are followed by a concise literature review that covers the few examples of previous scholarship to have paid attention to either Zakæus or Qalasirssuaq – and far less frequently, images of them. From here, the chapter is divided into two case studies that present the portraits in chronological order, describing, situating and discussing them in relationship to a range of other material; this includes exhibitions of living ‘savages’, images of other non-Western individuals who were similarly caught up in the history of exploration, classical art, nineteenth-century painting, illustrations published in physiognomical, phrenological and ethnological texts, as well as Inuit art and images produced by Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq themselves.

Investigating the place of Nasmyth’s portrait of Zakæus in the artist’s oeuvre, the first case study begins by examining the painting’s dual relationship to ethnographic imagery and personal portraiture. Exploring in particular competing and overlapping ideas about noble and ignoble ‘savages’, the case study finds that Nasmyth’s portrait links to paintings of idealised ‘savages’ from the later eighteenth century in its potential use of classical references and Europeanised features, while at the same time departing from this type of visual vocabulary in its apparent genuineness and intimacy. Arguing that Nasmyth’s painting of Zakæus may in fact have corresponded to the ways in which Zakæus seems to have chosen to represent himself while in Scotland, the case study then turns to a discussion of the performances he held during his first stay in Edinburgh. Comparing Zakæus’s performances with displays of living ‘savages’, the case study seeks to demonstrate how Zakæus may have succeeded in taking up an alternative identity and existence to those typically imposed upon other non-Western individuals brought to Europe at the time. As the

first Inuit to visit Britain in the nineteenth century, Zakæus not only participated in Britain's first Arctic expeditions of the century, he was in fact recognised for his contributions. While taking part in exploration, he additionally seems to have synthesised European and Inuit artistic approaches to produce alternative perspectives on the Arctic.

The second case study moves in something of an opposite direction. Encountering difficulties in attempting to uncover traces of Qalasirssuaq's individual voice, it finds that the portrait painted of him ultimately does little to express or evidence his uniqueness as a person. Focusing on the ways in which Qalasirssuaq's arrival in Britain was covered in the press, the case study draws on mid nineteenth-century discussions in art criticism to locate his portrait in relationship to broader interests in the comparative sciences at the time. Turning to a consideration of the intellectual climate onboard the expedition that brought Qalasirssuaq back to England and its motives for doing so, the case study goes on to argue that the portrait is better understood not as an intimate representation of a named individual, but as a scientific image of a 'pure specimen' of the 'Esquimaux race'. At the same time, the painting of Qalasirssuaq at least indirectly communicates the ways in which he was able to learn and adapt to European culture, revealing in the process the workings of a clear intellectual capacity that was – according to much current thinking – supposedly beyond the capabilities of Inuit and other 'savages'. Thus, while primarily documenting Qalasirssuaq's fate as an experiment of the civilising missions of the time, there is nonetheless an underlying tension in the painting that speaks to the unstableness of the terms 'savage' and 'civilised' at mid century.

Unlike in the two previous chapters, the reception of these two portraits is not exactly relevant, as there is no evidence suggesting that either was displayed publicly within the time period under examination. It is most likely the case that both paintings were seen by at least some people in private settings, although this too is difficult to establish.¹ It is not then the paintings themselves, but rather the two

¹ Very little is known about the accession history of either painting. The Scottish National Portrait Gallery acquired Nasmyth's portrait of Zakæus in 1981 from the

individuals they portray and the ways in which they were received in British society that are of interest in this chapter. Although it is only possible to speculate as to the various types of interaction Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq may have had with British individuals, fleeting evidence of the relationships that they did form while in Britain serves as a reminder that the power of direct contact and the role this potentially plays in shaping the perspectives of individuals should not be entirely forgotten.

Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq

Hans Zakæus was a young Inuk from Southwest Greenland who, apparently at his initiative, boarded a whaling vessel called the *Thomas and Ann* somewhere in the area of Disko Bay in the summer of 1816.² He arrived in Edinburgh in late August that year, where he stayed until the spring of 1817.³ During this time Zakæus made money through a series of performances held in Leith that seem to have been financially backed and arranged by Captain Newton and, possibly, Wood and Co. – respectively, the captain and owners of the *Thomas and Ann*.⁴ He returned to Greenland with the *Thomas and Ann* in 1817; however, after finding out that his sister had died while he had been away, Zakæus decided to travel back to Scotland that autumn.⁵ In late 1817 or early 1818 he met Nasmyth in Edinburgh, who painted his portrait and started giving him art lessons. When it became known that Britain planned to resume its search for a Northwest Passage, Nasmyth suggested that

Fine Arts Society Ltd., which knew nothing about its past. SNPG 2488, Department of Conservation June 1981; SNPG 2488 Smailes, 19 October 1982. Sometime between 1877 and 1904 Erasmus Ommanney, the captain of the ship that brought Qalasirssuaq to Britain, gave the portrait of Qalasirssuaq to either the Greenwich Hospital Collection or the Royal Navy Museum at the Royal Navy College, Greenwich. In the 1930s the portrait was most likely transferred from the Royal Navy Museum to the National Maritime Museum. Van Der Merwe, 2009.

² Zakæus's name has several different spellings. He became known as John Sakeouse in Britain, while the most frequent spelling used by Danish authors is Hans Zakæus – which seems to be the name he took on after being baptised in Greenland some time prior to his arrival in Britain. Other variations include Sacheuse and Saccheuse.

³ *Edinburgh Star* 23 August 1816; *Edinburgh Star* 27 August 1816.

⁴ *Edinburgh Star* 3 September 1816; *Edinburgh Star* 6 September 1816.

⁵ *Times* 6 September 1817.

Zakæus should join Ross's First Voyage as an interpreter, making the necessary arrangements for this to happen.⁶ As a result, Zakæus travelled to Deptford, London – probably in early March 1818 – where he stayed in one of Ross's vessels until the expedition left at the end of April that year.⁷ On this voyage Zakæus played a crucial role in establishing contact between Ross's expedition and a group of Inughuit – dubbed 'Arctic Highlanders' by Ross – living in the area of Cape York (Melville Bugt) of Northwest Greenland. After returning to England with Ross's expedition in late October 1818, Zakæus again spent some months in London before travelling to Edinburgh.⁸ Soon after, he fell ill with typhus and died at the age of twenty-two, on 14 February 1819.⁹ After his death, an engraving titled *First Communication* that was based on a field drawing – now lost – Zakæus had created in the Arctic was published in Ross's 1819 expedition account of his First Voyage. This field drawing, which documented the expedition's meeting with the Inughuit, was also used as source material in a popular exhibition titled *Peristrepthic Panorama of the Frozen Regions*, which travelled throughout Britain and Ireland in the early 1820s.¹⁰

Thirty-one years after Zakæus's death in Edinburgh, the 1850-1851 Franklin search expedition under the command of H. T. Austin stopped at Cape York in mid August 1850, where they met with the Inughuit that Zakæus and Ross had encountered in 1818. Here, they employed as both 'interpreter' and pilot a young Inughuit named Qalasirssuaq, who was assigned to the *HMS Assistance* captained by Erasmus Ommanney for the purpose of investigating claims that his people had killed Franklin's men.¹¹ Qalasirssuaq subsequently spent over a year living with Ommanney's crew, arriving at Woolwich onboard the *HMS Assistance* in early October 1851. Although he may have been prepared for this prolonged stay onboard

⁶ *Caledonian Mercury* 25 March 1819; Anon., about 1822, pp. 173-174.

⁷ Zakæus was in Deptford at least on 6 March 1818. SNPG 2488 Hall, 6 March 1818; *Caledonian Mercury* 30 March 1818; *Times* 3 April 1818; Fleming, 2001 (1998), p. 39.

⁸ Zakæus was still in Deptford on 15 December 1818. *Morning Chronicle* 15 December 1818. *Caledonian Mercury* 25 March 1819.

⁹ *Caledonian Mercury* 18 February 1819.

¹⁰ Potter, 2007, pp. 86-87.

¹¹ Murray, 1856, p. 9. Phillips, 14 August 1850. Qalasirssuaq was known as Erasmus York onboard Ommanney's vessel. In England, he was also referred to as Kalli.

Ommanney's vessel, Qalasirssuaq had not agreed as Zakæus had done to travel back to Britain. Ommanney had apparently been unable to return Qalasirssuaq to his home – as promised – when sailing past Cape York on the return journey, allegedly due to the ice conditions that year.¹² After arriving at Woolwich, Ommanney presented Qalasirssuaq to William T. Bullock at the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. At Ommanney's request, as supported by the Admiralty, Bullock organised a place for Qalasirssuaq at St. Augustine's Missionary College in Canterbury, where for the next four years he was educated as a missionary.¹³ It was during this time that his portrait – perhaps commissioned by Ommanney – was most likely painted. Qalasirssuaq also helped John Washington with his *Greenland-Eskimo Vocabulary*, a dictionary and phrase book in West Greenlandic (Kalaallisut), which was a different language from Qalasirssuaq's native tongue, Inuktun.¹⁴ In October 1855, following a decision made by the College warden and the Bishop of Newfoundland, Qalasirssuaq was sent to St. John's, Newfoundland where he was to receive more religious training before commencing work as a missionary among the Inuit in Labrador.¹⁵ However, Qalasirssuaq had suffered from poor health ever since joining Austin's expedition and, just eight months into his stay at St. John's he fell ill and died, probably from tuberculosis.¹⁶

While there are certainly similarities between Zakæus's and Qalasirssuaq's stories, their personal backgrounds – like the circumstances and nature of their stays in Britain – were quite different. As is clear already from his name, Zakæus was familiar with European culture before arriving in Scotland. As well as encountering Danish colonial administrators and missionaries, Zakæus would have had interaction with European whalers in the Disko Bay region prior to eventually boarding the *Thomas and Ann* in 1816.¹⁷ Qalasirssuaq, on the other hand, lived far north of the Danish settlements and his prior interaction with Europeans, before joining Austin's

¹² Petersen, 1860, p. 86. Murray, 1856, pp. 13-14.

¹³ CCA-U88-A5/8/1 Bullock, 29 October 1851.

¹⁴ Washington, 1853.

¹⁵ CCA-U88-A5/8/1 Ommanney, 25 July 1856.

¹⁶ CCA-U88-A5/8/1 Bailey, 16 July 1856; Murray, 1856, p. 51.

¹⁷ Ross, 1819, p. 42; Credland, 1982, p. 9.

expedition, would therefore have been limited at best to British whalers in the area around Cape York.¹⁸

Literature Review

Despite recent scholarly interest in uncovering and activating marginalised voices and alternative histories, there has been very little prior recognition of either Zakæus or Qalasirssuaq, much less the images of them, in Arctic studies or beyond. Both men are regularly mentioned in general historiographies of Arctic exploration, although they never receive any real attention beyond the very direct ways they participated in the expeditions in which they were involved.¹⁹ Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq also circulate, although far less frequently, in rather straightforward chronologies of Inuit individuals brought back to Britain between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries.²⁰ Overall this literature presents superficial and summarising accounts of Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq, tending to make either no use of primary sources or, alternatively, employing these uncritically.²¹ Other scholarship is more problematic still for the ways in which it simply perpetuates – instead of examines – stereotypes about the Inuit, particularly as found in missionary texts of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.²² The portraits of Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq

¹⁸ Murray, 1856, p. 22. Rasmussen, 1925, p. 134.

¹⁹ For example, Fleming, 2001 (1998), pp. 38, 43-44; Hayes, 2003, p. 60.

²⁰ Idiens, 1987; Savours, October 1963.

²¹ Dale Idiens's article of 1987, which reads very similarly to an account published by Marjorie Wilson that same year, describes Zakæus as a 'well-known example of an Eskimo who enjoyed a co-operative relationship with Scots' and had come to Europe to 'become a missionary and study the art of drawing'. Although she provides no reference for these claims, her information may originate in statements found in Ross's narrative of his First Voyage, wherein he writes that Zakæus had joined the expedition for missionary purposes. Ross's claim is not supported by other primary sources, most notably Zakæus's obituary and a memoir by an anonymous author that, although briefly stating that Zakæus was a Christian, do not suggest that he showed any motivation to become a missionary. Idiens, 1987, p. 166. Wilson, 1987. Ross, 1819, pp. xxxi-xxxii; Anon., about 1822, pp. 171-180; *Caledonian Mercury* 25 March 1819.

²² Aage Bugge, a minister and lecturer in Greenland, has published two articles (in Danish) on Qalasirssuaq, both in *Tidsskriftet Grønland* in 1965 and 1966. In his

have, for their part, received only marginal attention. Beyond initiatives taken by the museums that own the paintings to make them more available through displays and online catalogues, hardly anything has been published on the portraits.²³ Nasmyth's portrait of Zakæus is all but absent in art historical and biographical writings on the artist, with J. B. C. Cooksey's substantial monograph devoting only one sentence to the painting.²⁴

The situation is not much different in scholarship concerned specifically with representation in Arctic studies, where Zakæus, Qalasirssuaq, their portraits and other primary sources related to them are again rather peripheral. Spufford briefly includes Qalasirssuaq – but not the portrait – in a broader discussion of British nineteenth-century perceptions of Inuit peoples. Using Qalasirssuaq's fate as an example, Spufford usefully traces out the general differences between 'Rousseau-esque' notions of the late 1700s and Victorian views around 1850 – a change characterised by a shift from the acceptance of Inuit life as it was to the idea that the Inuit were indeed a very savage people that had to be civilised.²⁵ Both Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq make fleeting appearances in David's and Potter's works, with neither author offering much on these men or the various images related to them. David rightly points to Zakæus as the earliest nineteenth-century Inuit visitor to Britain; yet,

description of Qalasirssuaq's adjustment to British society, Bugge simply repeats – almost word by word – an inaccurate and somewhat ethnocentric account written by the Reverend R. J. E. Boggis in his *A History of St. Augustine's College* in 1907. Overall Bugge scripts Qalasirssuaq's fate in terms of a civilising mission ideology that understands the Inuit as culturally, if not also intellectually, inferior and in need of European government. Bugge, 1966; Bugge, 1965. Compare Boggis, 1907, p. 190. with Bugge, 1965, pp. 171-172.

²³ The portrait of Qalasirssuaq was part of a temporary exhibition titled *North-West Passage* held at the National Maritime Museum in 2009; Nasmyth's portrait of Zakæus was on display at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery the same year.

²⁴ Cooksey, 1991, p. 24. Cooksey lists the painting of Zakæus as an example of one of the three portraits the artist created after having abandoned portraiture for landscape painting. In his autobiography, which includes some memories of his father, James Nasmyth recounts the destruction of the Old Tollbooth in Edinburgh in 1817, but does not mention Zakæus's performances in Leith harbour, which had been an equally popular event only a year before. Neither does he write about his father's relationship with Zakæus. Nasmyth, 1885.

²⁵ Spufford, 1996, p. 202-203. See also Spufford's chapter 8 for a discussion of the development of ideas about Inuit peoples throughout the nineteenth century.

while acknowledging his performances in Leith as well as the field drawing reproduced in Ross's expedition account of 1819, David does not mention Nasmyth's portrait.²⁶ Although he is aware of the portrait of Qalasirssuaq, David does not pause to describe or analyse it when arguing that its display at the Royal Naval Exhibition at the very end of the nineteenth century supposedly 'did not challenge assumptions about the hostility of the Arctic environment'.²⁷ Potter is similarly cursory in his treatment of Zakæus; while usefully drawing attention to the popular exhibition that made use of Zakæus's field drawing he, like David, seems unaware of Nasmyth's portrait.²⁸

By far the most useful scholarship published to date is that of Inge Kleivan, although her focus has been on Qalasirssuaq alone. Kleivan provides a full biography on Qalasirssuaq that corrects faults in previous texts, as well as incorporating valuable insights into Inughuit culture at mid nineteenth century. She includes in her research all of the known portrayals of Qalasirssuaq, with her treatment of a print appearing in Prichard's 1855 edition of *The Natural History of Man* being particularly noteworthy. Kleivan also looks at other images of Inughuit produced in the early and late nineteenth century, such as engravings in Ross's narrative of his First Voyage and photographs taken by Robert Peary.²⁹

Alexander Nasmyth's Portrait of Hans Zakæus, about 1818

Born in 1758, Nasmyth was already a middle-aged, well-established painter when Zakæus first arrived in Edinburgh in 1816, by which time Nasmyth – although he had made his fortune painting the Scottish nobility and gentry – had mostly abandoned portraits for landscape painting. From 1792 until his death in 1840, Nasmyth in fact painted only four portraits, including the one of Zakæus. The others

²⁶ David, 2000, pp. 48-49, 132-133.

²⁷ David, 2000, p. 163.

²⁸ Potter, 2007, pp. 86-87. Potter makes no mention of Qalasirssuaq.

²⁹ Kleivan's more developed research has been published in Danish, although there is an earlier co-authored article available in English covering some of the same material. See Kleivan, 1999; Sturtevant and Kleivan, 1998.

were two portraits of Robert Burns and one of Nasmyth's friend and patron Patrick Miller.³⁰ These works were thus exceptions to his interests and overall oeuvre; according to Cooksey, when Nasmyth was asked to paint a portrait of Robert Burns for William Creech's Edinburgh edition of Burns's *Poems*, he had 'felt unwilling to undertake the task, he not being a portrait painter but a landscape painter'.³¹ All indications then are that the portrait Nasmyth painted of Zakæus was of some importance to him.

Nasmyth's portrait of Zakæus is small, measuring only 29.8 x 22.1 cm (**Fig. 4.1**). It is painted directly on a single piece of wood and shows Zakæus as a strong and healthy-looking youth with short black hair and rosy cheeks, wearing a grey-coloured parka, brown gloves and a necklace of bones. Standing in front of a dark and cloudy sky, Zakæus holds a harpoon tightly with both hands. The way he grips the weapon, with the rope purposefully arranged in loops, looking seriously and alertly out to the left beyond the picture frame, lends itself to an exciting reading of the painting. The viewer can readily imagine Zakæus in his Arctic homeland, out hunting – or perhaps keeping watch for – a seal or whale. The rough brushstrokes, which give the impression that the painting had been quickly executed, could imply that it was intended as a sketch for a bigger portrait; or, alternatively, that it was a finished, non-commissioned work that the artist wanted to keep in his collection.³² There is also some indication that Nasmyth was at some point employed to produce images of Inuit dress.³³ This suggests that Nasmyth's portrait of Zakæus may have been entangled in two different forms of representation. On the one hand, it connects to ethnographic imagery, bringing forth questions about the work's relationship to contemporary ideas about 'savages'. On the other hand, the painting is reminiscent of portraits of explorers.

³⁰ Cooksey, 1991, p. 24.

³¹ Cooksey, 1991, p. 25.

³² As mentioned in the introduction it is not known how, when or from whom the Fine Arts Society Ltd acquired the portrait.

³³ Hall, 1819, p. 656.

Several short biographical texts that were published after his death in February 1819 claim that Zakæus met Nasmyth accidentally on the streets of Leith in the beginning of 1818 – although Ross states in the narrative of his First Voyage that this happened in the winter of 1817.³⁴ Regardless of when their first meeting occurred, it seems that Nasmyth's original objective was to paint Zakæus – possibly due to an interest in ethnography. According to Nasmyth's contemporary Captain Basil Hall, Nasmyth was 'naturally attracted by' Zakæus's 'appearance' because of a previous commission he had had 'to execute a set of drawings of the Esquimaux costume'.³⁵ This may explain why Nasmyth chose to paint him in 'native' dress, even though Zakæus's clothing had by this time apparently been 'a good deal modified by his European habits'.³⁶

In terms of its format alone, Nasmyth's portrait of Zakæus brings forth associations to ethnographic images in travel and expedition accounts, such as Cook's *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*, that were published in quarto size (31 x 25 cm).³⁷ Like images of Arctic peoples painted by other professional artists in Europe at about the same time, Nasmyth's portrait invites close examination. Two paintings by Léon Cogniet for example – *Effet de neige en Russie*, showing a woman in animal skins driving a dog sled, and *Une femme du pays des Esquimaux*, showing a woman and two dogs in an Arctic landscape – are comparable in size, with the larger work measuring 42.5 x 36.5 cm (**Figs. 4.2, 4.3**). This separates them from many commissioned portraits, which tended to be more or less life size – thereby setting up a one-to-one relationship with the viewer that established the importance of the sitter while inspiring awe and admiration.

³⁴ The source for this information is an un-authored biographical obituary published in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine*, subsequently attributed by Barrow to Captain Basil Hall Hall, 1819, p. 656. Barrow, 1819, p. 218. Other known sources from the time period seem to be reprints of this article. *Caledonian Mercury* 25 March 1819; Anon., about 1822, p. 173. Ross, 1819, p. xxxii.

³⁵ Hall, 1819, p. 656.

³⁶ Hall, 1819, p. 656. Anon., about 1822, p. 173.

³⁷ Cook, 1785.

Nasmyth's painting of Zakæus nonetheless links, despite its small size, to nineteenth-century portraits of Arctic explorers, which usually emphasized the sitter's relationship to the Arctic and clearly displayed their merits as explorers and navigators. Explorers were most often dressed in furs and the uniforms they may have worn on their expeditions, holding or surrounded by artefacts associated with the Arctic. Samuel Drummond's portrait of William Edward Parry equipped with a telescope and wearing a white glove most likely made of polar bear fur, is typical of the category (**Fig. 4.4**). Painted at most two years after Nasmyth's portrait of Zakæus, Drummond's portrait shows a similarly stoical and austere figure looking out past the frame of the painting against a stormy sky.

A reading of Nasmyth's painting of Zakæus as portrait rather than ethnographic image is further supported by a consideration of the very real historical differences – explored at greater length later in this case study – between Zakæus and other non-Western individuals brought to Europe in the nineteenth century. Although unidentified, the woman pictured in Cogniet's *Une femme du pays des Esquimaux* for example is most likely – as has been suggested by Louise D'Argencourt – one of two Inuit brought to Europe in 1825 by an American captain named Haddock.³⁸ D'Argencourt has linked Cogniet's painting to an announcement published in the Parisian newspaper *Le Journal de Paris* in October that year describing a twenty-one year old woman performing in a show with her dog and sled. The show had apparently arrived in Paris after a successful tour of Europe and further included the body of an Inuit man who had recently died in Strasbourg but was 'preserved in such a way that he still looks alive', the head of a 'man-eating chief from New Zealand' and a panorama of Baffin's Bay.³⁹

Although Cogniet's painting was not 'from nature', as he had advertised, the obvious ethnographic intent with his image seems matched to the terms of this woman's existence in Europe.⁴⁰ Set in a highly detailed though completely imagined Arctic landscape, Cogniet shows his sitter *en face* and in full-length so as to present the best

³⁸ D'Argencourt, 1999, p. 138.

³⁹ *Le Journal de Paris* quoted in D'Argencourt, 1999, p. 138.

⁴⁰ D'Argencourt, 1999, p. 138.

view of her physical appearance, dress, adornment and material culture. Just like the show in which she performed, Cogniet seems to have offered her up – as is clear already in the title of his painting – as a specimen to be stared at, entertained by and closely examined. Unlike Cogniet's 'woman from the land of the Esquimaux', Zakæus had of course not been taken to Europe for the explicit purpose of being displayed in public, thus complicating any superficial similarities that might be drawn between the ethnographic content of Nasmyth's and Cogniet's paintings. On top of this, the personal relationship existing between Zakæus and Nasmyth most likely influenced the way in which Zakæus came to be represented. It is nonetheless instructive to examine in detail contemporary ideas about and approaches to representation of Inuit and other 'discovered' peoples that may have impacted Nasmyth.

Ignoble and Noble Savages

Ideas about the Inuit in the early nineteenth century mirror those held about other 'savages' – particularly peoples now classified as hunter-gatherers – more generally, and can be similarly divided into two opposing but converging strains of thought. On the one hand is the negative framing of the Inuit as thieving, deceitful, violent, dirty, bestial, ignorant, childlike, lazy, amoral and cannibalistic. On the other hand are the more positive notions of a pure, innocent, egalitarian and peaceful people untainted by the corruptions of civilisation and living in harmony with one another and their environment.⁴¹ While these two framings frequently shifted and overlapped with one another, it was the negative portrayal that tended to dominate, although there was of course also some admiration for the Inuit, particularly concerning their strength, durability, stamina and ability to survive in such a harsh climate. It is also the case that the more extreme notions making up the negative framing of 'savages' – namely, violence and cannibalism – were only rarely applied to the Inuit.⁴²

⁴¹ Henry Stewart has taken up this classic dichotomy in more detail, using the terms 'Evil Savage' and 'Noble Savage'. Stewart, 2002.

⁴² These notions featured more prominently in sixteenth-century accounts. For example, the text published in a 1567 handbill, originally in German, describing the

The writings of Hans Egede, a Danish-Norwegian Lutheran missionary who worked in Greenland from 1721 to 1736, were typical for eighteenth and early nineteenth-century thinking about the Inuit as ‘carnally-minded’, ‘naturally very stupid and indolent’, with ‘silly and childish’ behaviour and ‘foolish superstitions’.⁴³ In his *Description of Greenland*, tropes of ‘the Ignoble Savage’ circulated alongside ‘the Noble Savage’, revealing an overriding sense of repulsion mediated with faint praise for their peaceful nature:

the *Greenlanders* [...] are very slovenly, nasty and filthy; they seldom wash themselves, will eat out of Plates and Bowls after their Dogs, without cleansing them; and (what is most nauseous to behold) eat Lice and such like Vermin, which they find upon themselves or others [...] They will scrape the Sweat from off their Faces with a knife, and lick it up. They do not blush to sit down and ease themselves in the Presence of others. Yet notwithstanding their nasty and most beastly Way of living, they are a very good natur’d and friendly in Conversation [...] Never any of them has offered in the least Manner to hurt or do Harm to any of our People, unless provok’d to it.⁴⁴

Published in English in both 1745 and 1818, Egede’s text – together with David Cranz’s *The History of Greenland* of 1767 – was an influential and authoritative source on the Inuit up through the first half of the nineteenth century, during which time it was often referenced in both Arctic expedition accounts and scientific texts.⁴⁵ To several of the scientists and explorers who made use of Egede’s and Cranz’s works in this period, the ways in which they described the physical appearance of the Greenland Inuit would have been of particular interest. To eighteenth-century naturalists like Linné and Blumenbach, Egede’s writings on the Inuit’s general skin, eye and hair colour, as well as head shape and facial and bodily features may have

deceased husband of an Inuit woman and their child brought to Antwerp in 1566 and displayed there, claimed that this man had ‘killed 12 people with his own hands [...] in order to eat them, for they like to eat no flesh better than human flesh’. Feest, 1987, p. 130. The alleged violence of Inuit peoples is also evident in accounts of Frobisher’s Arctic voyages, see for example McGhee, 2001, chapters 5 and 7.

⁴³ Egede, 1818, pp. 214, 215, 217.

⁴⁴ Egede, 1818, pp. 127-128. See also Egede, 1745, pp. 127-128.

⁴⁵ Spufford, 1996, pp. 203-204. Egede and Cranz are referenced in for example, Ross, 1819, pp. 109, 127; Parry, 1824a, pp. 393, 494; Cox, 1834 (1833)-a, p. 294; Prichard, 1848, p. 378. Cranz was a German missionary working in Greenland.

confirmed their separate classifications of humankind into different groups.⁴⁶

Although Linné, Blumenbach and their like clearly favoured the European in terms of their own ideas about beauty, they did not however argue that there was a connection between the physical appearance and mental character of the peoples they grouped together.⁴⁷ The assumption of such a connection, which became increasingly prevalent as the eighteenth century drew to a close, nonetheless seems to build on the terms of classification first proposed in the Enlightenment.

Essentially providing a platform to further ideas about the ‘Ignoble Savage’, the newfound interest in physiognomy that emerged at the end of the eighteenth century increasingly asserted that there was a link between appearance and character discernable within both individuals and entire ‘races’. The writings of J. K. Lavater (1741-1801) were rather singularly responsible for the popularisation of physiognomy, with his forty-one *Essays on Physiognomy* – a bestseller until 1870 – being published in English by John Murray I between 1788 and 1799, first as forty-one separate parts and later as a complete set of five volumes.⁴⁸ In these texts, Lavater presented countless descriptions of various head shapes and facial features and the associated mental characteristics these were meant to denote. While Lavater was mainly discussing the physiognomy of Europeans and European individuals, his essay ‘Difference of Skulls Relatively to Sexes and Nations’ included descriptions of the skulls of an Indian, African and ‘Nomade Tartar, or Calmuck’ – a group in which the Inuit and other Arctic peoples were often placed by contemporary scientists. Comparing these specimens, Lavater argued that the Indian head announced ‘a person whose appetites are gross and sensual, and incapable of being affected by mental pleasure and delicacy of feeling’, while ‘the arch of the forehead’ of the African head ‘bears not that character of stupidity which is manifest in the other parts of the head’. Continuing in this vein, Lavater similarly claimed that the ‘flat forehead and sunk eyes’ of the ‘Nomad Tartar, or Calmuck’ were ‘signs of cowardice and rapacity’ since ‘every remarkable concavity in the profile of the head, and consequently in its form, denotes weakness in the mind: it seems as if this part were

⁴⁶ Linné, 1744; Blumenbach, 1950 [1776].

⁴⁷ Burke, 1972, pp. 266-269; Stocking, 1987, p. 26.

⁴⁸ Cowling, 1989, p. 19; Pinney, 1997, p. 51.

sinking in search of support, as a feeble constitution naturally seeks to prop itself by foreign aid'.⁴⁹

The negative framing of 'savages' that is clearly present in Lavater's brief analysis of Indian, African and Calmuck skulls, was reiterated with more force in later physiognomical writings – many of which tended to draw liberally from Lavater's original work. For example, a British publication of 1800 titled *Lavater's Looking Glass*, revealed a strong bias for Europeans and a contrastingly poor view on all other peoples, including the Inuit. Authored by 'Lavater, Sue & Co.', the description of the faces, heads and bodies of various Arctic peoples presented in this book seem to fit Egede's derogatory account of the behaviour and characteristics of the Greenland Inuit; the subtext of the adjectives they used would have been rather obvious to the early nineteenth-century reader:

Laplanders, Samoides, Bozandians, Greenlanders, Esquimaux, and others, will be found to differ only in the shades of ugliness, having the face broad and flat, the nose smashed, eye-lids drawn out towards the temples, very large mouths, thick lips, high cheeks, thick and short heads, squeaking voice, small stature, squat and lean, and seldom above four to four and a half feet.⁵⁰

Considering its obsession with physical appearance, it is not surprising that physiognomy concerned itself with artistic conventions for representing the human figure, and heads in particular. Although not evident directly in the passage above, *Lavater's Looking Glass* was – like Lavater's *Essays on Physiognomy* and other books on physiognomy – targeted at painters.⁵¹ Promoting a physiognomically-driven concept of 'good' art, its authors set Inuit in direct contrast to Europeans to champion an obviously hierarchical and race-based view of humankind:

A good painter will not, we know, draw a Patagonian like a Laplander, nor make an European resemble an African blackamoor. He will take off the national distinguishing feature perceived in every country. In his pictures, the

⁴⁹ Lavater, 1792, p. 162.

⁵⁰ Sue and Lavater, 1800, p. 23. The same description is found in Lavater, 1826, p. 110.

⁵¹ Sue and Lavater, 1800, chapters 1, 6, 17. This was typical for other works, which similarly included chapters on painting and advice to artists Lavater, 1792. Lavater, 1826, chapter 50.

Frenchman, the Englishman, and the Circassian, must appear as they really are, formed in Nature's fairest shape; while the Calmouck and Greenlander should be represented in their true light, with diminutive eyes, shapeless faces, and hollow nostrils. The Caribbee should likewise be distinguished by his flat skull and piercing eye.⁵²

Ranging from the inhabitants of New Holland and New Guinea to 'Turks, Persians, Moguls, Chinese and other eastern nations', such descriptions effectively presented a ready-made checklist to artists, guiding them in how to accurately capture the 'true' features of 'savage' peoples – or, in their terms, 'the natural deformity of people far removed from the standard of perfection'.⁵³ Perhaps ironically, the overriding demand for truthfulness in representation advocated by the authors of *Lavater's Looking Glass* seems to result in little more than caricatures, the underlying idea being that people of a certain 'race' could – and must – only look a certain way.

Positioning Nasmyth's painting in relation to the only two other known images of Zakæus reveals that attempts at representing a non-Western individual could have radically varied results – suggesting perhaps the workings of very different ideas about 'savages'. An undated engraving of Zakæus by W. and D. Lizars based on a portrait by Amelia Anderson seems to correspond rather more closely with the way in which Inuit were, according to a range of sources dating as far back as Egede, supposed to look (**Fig. 4.5**).⁵⁴ Accompanied by a vignette of Zakæus in his kayak and eight lines of text and a sample of his handwriting, the engraving appears to deliver as expected, showing a version of Zakæus that can be read more or less interchangeably against either *Lavater's Looking Glass* or, in this case, Cranz:

Their face is commonly broad and flat, with high cheek-bones, but round and plump cheeks. Their eyes are little and black, but devoid of sparkling fire. It is true their nose is not flat, but it is small, and projects but little. Their mouth

⁵² Sue and Lavater, 1800, pp. 20-21.

⁵³ Sue and Lavater, 1800, pp. 20-25.

⁵⁴ Although undated, the engraving was most likely produced sometime during Zakæus's second stay in Edinburgh – that is, between the autumn of 1817 and the spring of 1818. The text featured in the print primarily focuses on the performances Zakæus gave following his arrival in 1816. It does not mention his participation in Ross's First Voyage, suggesting the print predates Zakæus's departure for London.

is [...] round, and the under-lip somewhat thicker than the upper. Their body is dark-grey all over, but the face brown or olive.⁵⁵

While the similarities between such written descriptions and Lizars's engraving of Zakæus might have occurred during reproduction, a sketch of Zakæus produced some months after Nasmyth's portrait, and which was similarly drawn from life, seems to make use of the same vocabulary (**Fig. 4.6**). Featuring in Andrew M. Skene's sketchbook from Ross's First Voyage, the drawing of Zakæus in what appears to be a British naval uniform – rather than sealskin parka – appears to capture the round head, flat face, short neck, thick under-lip and small, stretched eyes 'characteristic' of the Inuit, although the result does seem to present a different person than Lizars's engraving.

Most if not all of these physical features are absent in Nasmyth's portrait, as if the sitter were yet again a different person still. Nasmyth's painting thus seems to go against the established physiognomical descriptions of the ways in which 'Greenlanders' were supposed to look, representing Zakæus with features that were – particularly in comparison to the other two images – far more 'European': a more oval head, longer neck, larger nose, rounder eyes and lighter skin colour.

The potential Europeanising of Zakæus, if this is indeed what is at stake in Nasmyth's portrait, could of course result from the fact that Nasmyth – well trained in drawing classical figures and heads – was used to painting British individuals and may have intuitively drawn on such a template when representing Zakæus.⁵⁶ At the same time, Nasmyth appears to have been a clear and perhaps even outspoken sceptic of phrenology, meaning that his portrait of Zakæus might have resulted from an underlying resistance – intentional or not – to the increasing focus on physical appearance advocated by physiognomy and the other new life sciences in their ongoing project to hierarchically group and order humankind.

⁵⁵ Cranz, 1767, pp. 132-133. Egede gave a very similar description: 'their faces broad, thick lips, and flat nosed; their hair and eyes black, their complexion a very dark tawny'. Egede, 1818, p. 119.

⁵⁶ Cooksey, 1991, pp. 10-24.

In the earliest years of phrenology's introduction to Scotland, just one or two years before meeting Zakæus for the first time in 1818, Nasmyth attended at least one lecture given by Spurzheim to medical doctors and others in Edinburgh.⁵⁷ According to Nasmyth's contemporary, Dr. David Brewster, Spurzheim's lectures ignited an argument that divided the audience between supporters and critics of phrenology. Nasmyth apparently sided with the latter group, expressing his doubts about the new science through a rather succinct and incisive joke:

In this strife of parties, Mr. Alexander Nasmyth, the celebrated landscape painter, sent to his phrenological friend...the cast of a remarkable head. The cast was carefully examined, and its high moral and intellectual development was duly recorded and presented to the artist. But, alas! for science, the cast had been taken from a remarkable turnip that had presumed with the craniology of man. The result of the experiment was instructive as well as amusing. It outweighed a thousand arguments and gave occasion to the following lament:

The Tide of Fame to Spurzheim's name
Rolled o'er the German deep;
The tide was Spring, but fickle thing,
It now has ebb'd to Neep!⁵⁸

While Nasmyth was certainly not convinced as to the credibility of Spurzheim's teachings – unlike some other artists working in Edinburgh during the first few decades of the nineteenth century – his seemingly more European representation of Zakæus was not necessarily painted in opposition to phrenology or its attendant ideas about the particular condition of 'savages' and their inferior relationship to Europeans.⁵⁹ Rather, Nasmyth's painting may have linked to the more positive

⁵⁷ According to Nasmyth's biographer, Nasmyth attended Spurzheim's talk(s) in 1817, while Spurzheim's biographer writes that the lectures took place in June 1816. Cooksey, 1991, p. 70; Carmichael, 1833, pp. 15, 17.

⁵⁸ David Brewster cited in Cooksey, 1991, pp. 70-71.

⁵⁹ In addition to the sculptor Samuel Joseph (1791-1850) and the painter William Stewart Watson (1800-1870), a number of artists joined the Edinburgh Phrenological Society in the early 1820s: a Mr Rennie, William Douglas, James Stewart, Patrick Gibson, Thomas Uwins and John Morrison. *Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* 1826 (1825), pp. 478, 481. At the 'Dinner of the Phrenological Society' in 1826 Douglas, a miniature painter, argued how phrenology had benefited his work and how 'he conceived it impossible for any one to understand the ultimate principles of

framing of the ‘savage’ that was characteristic of enlightenment thought, thus expressing the other long-standing stereotype that had, since at least the discovery of the New World, existed side by side with that of the ‘Ignoble Savage’.

Nasmyth’s portrait of Zakæus seems to share at least something in common with two paintings of South Sea islanders associated with Cook’s voyages that were exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1776 and 1785. Joshua Reynolds’s *Omai*, a painting of a Tahitian man brought to Britain in 1774, shows a rather sculpted figure standing in front of a ‘Mediterranean’ background, bringing forth associations to the second century sculpture of Apollo Belvedere (**Figs. 4.7, 4.8**). John Webber’s *Poedua, the Daughter of Orio*, a portrayal of a woman he first painted onboard Cook’s vessel at Raiatea in 1777, shows a similarly statuesque figure covered in white draperies from the waist down (**Fig. 4.9**). Her pose is reminiscent of Praxiteles’s *Aphrodite of Cnidus*, or copies of it (**Fig. 4.10**).⁶⁰ Just as Columbus and other early explorers of the New World had done in their initial accounts of Cuba and Haiti, British officers who travelled with Cook on his voyages often described the Pacific islands as an Arcadia and their inhabitants as Greek heroes, gods and goddesses.⁶¹ Although primarily a distant paradise in the popular imagination, the allure of the Pacific at least sometimes travelled back to Britain, with Omai being generally admired by English society in the later eighteenth century for his ‘ingenious charm and graceful manner’.⁶²

Clearly caught up in this way of thinking, the sitters in Webber’s and Reynolds’s portraits do not come across as real individuals however, but rather as idealised ‘savages’. Both paintings result in fact from a distortion of the actual circumstances

this branch of his art who was ignorant of the science’. *Phrenological Journal and Miscellany* 1827, p. 153.

⁶⁰ Smith, 1950, p. 80; Postle and Hallett, 2005, pp. 216-218; National Maritime Museum, 2010.

⁶¹ For more on the Americas as an earthly paradise see Honour, 1976, chapter 1; Robe, 1972, pp. 42-44. It was not uncommon for eighteenth-century thinking, as in Joseph Lafitau’s *Customs of the American Indians* of 1724, to draw a direct link between ‘savages’ and romantic ideas about Antiquity, comparing living American Indians for example with the ancient Greeks. Stocking, 1987, pp. 12-13.

⁶² Smith, 1950, pp. 79-84.

under which they were created. This is particularly noticeable in Webber's work which was, in something of an opposite scenario to the claim made by his choice of a tropical background, initially sketched while Poedua – who was pregnant at the time – was being held hostage together with her husband in one of the ship's cabins. Webber nonetheless painted her in nature as an object of male desire; a 'goddess' of beauty, love and fertility, she stands half-naked in front of a hot and lush landscape with her eyes fixed on the viewer.⁶³ Nasmyth was most likely familiar with such idealisations of 'savages', and his representation of Zakæus appears to employ a similar aesthetic and visual coding. On the other hand, his portrait cannot be said to be as overtly classical or staged as the examples by Reynolds and Webber.

While Nasmyth's portrait of Zakæus may express notions of a noble savage, it might – whether alternatively or simultaneously – be a representation of how Zakæus actually looked. As seen from two photographs of unidentified men taken during Edward Augustus Inglefield's expedition of 1854, head shapes and facial features of Greenland Inuit were of course varied (**Figs. 4.11, 4.12**).⁶⁴ Additionally, there has been a suggestion that Zakæus may have been part Danish, although this is not mentioned in any primary sources.⁶⁵ Thus, rather than changing Zakæus's body and head to fit a classical template, as was the case in Reynolds's *Omai* and Webber's *Poedua, the Daughter of Orio*, Nasmyth's ambition may have been to give as accurate a portrayal as possible – but not necessarily in the sense of physical likeness. The result might, in other words, be a portrait in the fullest meaning; not an ethnographic or physiognomic image, nor a painting of a noble savage, but – or perhaps also – an intimate and sensitive portrayal of a unique individual.

While he may well have Europeanised Zakæus's face, whether as a result of his artistic training or as an indirect expression of enlightenment ideas, Nasmyth's

⁶³ National Maritime Museum, 2010.

⁶⁴ The first photograph is of a Christianised man in Sisimiut/Holsteinborg, Southern Greenland; there is no information about the person in the second photograph. See the National Maritime Museum's online catalogue.

⁶⁵ In correspondence with the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, N. O. Christensen has suggested that Zakæus's father might have been Danish. SNPG 2488 Christensen, 17 December 1982.

portrait seems to respond to the ways in which Zakæus might have chosen to present himself, at least in some instances, within the particular contexts of his stay in Scotland. The nature of Zakæus's and Nasmyth's relationship seems in any case to have been very different from the terms and circumstances governing most eighteenth and nineteenth-century encounters between 'savage' peoples and the artists who painted them, whether in Europe or during exploration. Unlike Poedua or Omai, Zakæus was neither a captive onboard a British ship nor a 'guest' – albeit with potential political motives of his own – among high society in England.⁶⁶ Nasmyth was not involved in any imperial or scientific enterprises and, given the fact that Zakæus could speak English, was able to communicate with him; moreover, they shared a common interest in drawing and met with one another over a period of a few months.

Exhibiting Savages

During his first stay in Edinburgh, Zakæus performed a number of times in Leith harbour during the autumn and winter of 1816-1817 in a one-man show that links to early nineteenth-century exhibitions of both non-Western peoples and European 'freaks' – individuals with disfigurements and deformities, visible illnesses or other abnormalities.⁶⁷ While these types of exhibitions were not new, such displays and the amusement they offered were now 'In addition to the durable basic appeal of the remote and the strange' promoting the notion that they 'contributed to scientific knowledge'.⁶⁸

In 1810, six years before Zakæus arrived in Scotland, a Kohisan woman from South Africa named Saartjie Baartman was displayed in Europe in a show organised by a

⁶⁶ According to Martin Postle, the reason 'Omai' agreed to go to Britain was to gain military support in order to drive the South Sea islanders, who had taken his land, off his native island of Raiatea. Postle and Hallett, 2005, p. 218; Pulling, 1880, p. 62.

⁶⁷ According to Basil Hall, he performed in the winter of 1816-17 and his exhibitions are not mentioned in any newspapers after 1816. Hall, 1819, p. 656. For more on displays of living people in this time period see Altick, 1978, chapters 19 and 20.

⁶⁸ Altick, 1978, p. 268.

surgeon named Alexander Dunlop and a captain called Hendric Cezar. Most likely brought to London from South Africa as a slave, Baartman was first shown to a group of scientists, including Joseph Banks, in a preview at 225 Piccadilly. After multiple shows at this venue, Dunlop and Cezar took their exhibition on tour, with Baartman dying in Paris in 1815 where Cuvier immediately dissected her body.⁶⁹

Two prints reveal that Baartman was advertised as ‘Sartjee, the Hottentot Venus’ in London. The first, a black and white etching published by Cezar shows Baartman almost naked and turned so as to expose the contour and size of her buttocks in particular (**Fig. 4.13**). The second print depicts her as Venus, again in full length, raised on a pedestal surrounded by gawking Britons and Frenchmen (**Fig. 4.14**). Reviews of Cezar’s and Dunlop’s show in London suggest these prints corresponded to the nature of their exhibition. In a letter to the editor of *The Examiner*, a reader described how ‘with no other clothing than a tight dress, the colour of her skin, and a few rude ornaments [...] the dreadful deformity of her person was fully displayed’.⁷⁰ Similarly, an article in *The Times* explained that ‘she is dressed in a colour as nearly resembling her skin as possible. The dress is contrived to exhibit the entire frame of her body, and the spectators are even invited to examine the peculiarities of her form’.⁷¹ Exposed in this way, Baartman who was twenty-two years old at the time performed in front of a ‘hut’ by dancing and playing some kind of guitar.⁷²

In January 1822, just under three years after Zakæus’s death, another display of living ‘savages’ opened in London. In front of his panorama of the North Cape, William Bullock introduced a small herd of reindeer and three Sámi people – a four-year-old boy and his parents, Jens Holm and Karina Christian.⁷³ Apparently Bullock had gone through some trouble to arrange this show; according to him, this was his third try at ‘procuring a stock of deer, and if possible a Lapland family with them’.⁷⁴ Due to the current popularity of human exhibitions – other shows advertised in

⁶⁹ Holmes, 2007, pp. xiii, 5, 84-85, 115, 118-122, 134, 153-158.

⁷⁰ *Examiner* 14 October 1810.

⁷¹ *Times* 26 November 1810.

⁷² *Examiner* 14 October 1810.

⁷³ *Morning Chronicle* 19 January 1822.

⁷⁴ *Morning Chronicle* 19 January 1822.

newspapers throughout 1822 included for example ‘the celebrated French Giant’ and a ‘Wild Indian Chief, Wife and Child’ – Bullock must have been quite sure that his efforts to bring reindeer and a ‘diminutive and extraordinary People [...] the first of their race ever seen in London’, to Britain would pay off.⁷⁵ Indeed, within three months of opening, the Sámi family and reindeer had attracted 56,000 visitors to the Egyptian Hall at Piccadilly.⁷⁶ After ending in mid-May, the show travelled to Edinburgh and Liverpool before coming back to London in December where the family again performed at the Egyptian Hall while ‘waiting for a fair wind to return to their native country’.⁷⁷

Newspaper reviews describe how the family was placed in front of a ‘panoramic view of Lapland’ and surrounded by ‘two specimens of their summer and winter cabins [...] some cloaks, boots, weapons, &c. peculiar to that northern region’.⁷⁸ Dressed in ‘the full costume of their country’ the couple demonstrated how reindeer could be used to pull ‘light carriages and sledges’ and, through a Norwegian interpreter, answered questions from the audience. In addition to its entertainment value, Bullock’s exhibition was considered instructive. According to the *Liverpool Mercury*’s advertisement for the show, the material richness of the exhibition conveyed to the spectator, and to children in particular, ‘a clearer idea of this hitherto little-known Country, than the perusal of volumes on the subject’.⁷⁹ Bullock’s show also seems to have engaged with science, with the London reviews including long descriptions of the Sámi couple, whose ‘stature’, ‘physiognomy’ and ‘striking’ contrast to the Norwegian interpreter were discussed in detail.⁸⁰

The exhibitions of Baartman and the Sámi family were a clear cultural by-product of imperialism; their value as objects of display was not primarily their traits or

⁷⁵ *Morning Chronicle* 9 May 1822; *Liverpool Mercury* 11 October 1822b. *Morning Chronicle* 15 January 1822.

⁷⁶ *Morning Chronicle* 10 March 1822.

⁷⁷ *Liverpool Mercury* 11 October 1822b; *Caledonian Mercury* 20 July 1822. *Morning Chronicle* 3 December 1822.

⁷⁸ *Examiner* 20 January 1822.

⁷⁹ *Liverpool Mercury* 11 October 1822a.

⁸⁰ *Morning Chronicle* 19 January 1822; *Examiner* 20 January 1822.

peculiarities as individuals, but rather the ways in which they were meant to be representative for the dress, physical appearance and behaviour of their ‘race’ at large.⁸¹ Zakæus’s performances in Leith certainly fit within this type of show business, and seem to have been similarly caught up in scientific and popular interests in the study and understanding of ‘savage’ peoples. Like Baartman and the Sámi family, Zakæus became a human spectacle with throngs of people surrounding his initial lodgings onboard the *Thomas and Ann* in Leith harbour to get a view of the ‘Esquimaux’.⁸² Even larger crowds came to his performances, with the *Edinburgh Star* for example reporting that ‘The sea was covered with boats filled with Ladies and Gentlemen’; one could not ‘recollect ever to have seen so vast an assemblage of persons of all ranks at Leith to witness any public exhibition’.⁸³ In addition to the pier itself, ‘windows and roofs of houses [...] the decks and riggings of the vessels’ were so crowded with spectators that some were pushed into the water.⁸⁴ Lizars’s print gives the same impression, describing how Zakæus had performed ‘in the presence of the greatest concourse of spectators ever known to have assembled at Leith’.

The organisation of Zakæus’s shows bore additional similarities, beyond its popularity, to other displays of non-Western people. Before Zakæus’s performances, spectators had the chance to gaze at Zakæus in a wareroom at the docks of Leith, wherein he was dressed in his ‘native costume’ and surrounded by Arctic ‘curiosities’ such as his ‘canoe [...] two sea unicorn’s horns, the skulls of a sea-horse

⁸¹ Altick, 1978, p. 268.

⁸² Apparently, the masses of people caused Captain Newton to send Zakæus ashore ‘to his own lodgings’ in order to be able to unload the ship’s cargo *Caledonian Mercury* 2 September 1816; *Liverpool Mercury* 13 September 1816. The British responded in a similar way to Baartman’s and the Sámi family’s presence in London. Concerning the Sámi, one peculiar ‘advertisement’ featured in *The Morning Chronicle*. Describing the family’s daily habit of early morning walks, the short announcement sounds almost like an invitation to join the author in stalking them, reporting that on fine days the ‘Laplanders (in English dress)’ could be seen outside public buildings very early in the morning. *Morning Chronicle* 1 March 1822. *Edinburgh Advertiser* 6 September 1816, p. 159.

⁸³ *Edinburgh Star* 6 September 1816.

⁸⁴ *Edinburgh Star* 6 September 1816; *Scots Magazine* September 1816, p. 656.

and bear, the car[cass?] of a whale, and the preserved skin of a black eagle'.⁸⁵ While all this clearly played upon the current interest in displays of living 'savages', the character and circumstances of the ways in which Zakæus and other 'specimens' were exhibited were arguably rather different.

In contrast to the contrived hut of Dunlop's and Cezar's exhibition of Baartman, or Bullock's elaborate recreation of Lapland, the pre-show display of Zakæus and Inuit and Arctic artefacts in a 'Wet Dock' wareroom seems to have been simpler and less staged. According to the *Edinburgh Star*, this was not even part of the 'Exhibition'.⁸⁶ The real event happened afterwards and lasted about an hour and a half. Instead of the indoor spaces in which Baartman and the Sámi family had been contained, Zakæus's show took place outside in the Firth of Forth. Although these aspects alone do not separate fully between Zakæus's shows and the likes of Dunlop's and Cezar's or Bullock's, the response to these exhibitions suggests that something more was actually at stake. The legality and ethics of Dunlop's and Cezar's display of Baartman were called into question, with the entrepreneurs even being taken to court.⁸⁷ There were critics of Bullock's show too, with *The Examiner* writing that 'it can be no pleasant thing to be gazed at for hours by all sorts of people in a strange country'.⁸⁸

Reviews of Zakæus's shows in Edinburgh, which included a rowing contest between Zakæus and a 'well-manned six-oared boat' as well as throws with his harpoon, suggest he was generally held in high regard.⁸⁹ The *Edinburgh Star* for example commented that Zakæus's 'dexterity in managing his canoe was admirable, and he evidently showed his ability to overcome his opponents in point of speed, by the advantages he often gave them, and which he as often redeemed'. The *Aberdeen Journal* noted how 'in an instant, he may be seen to dive under the water, *head down and keel uppermost*; again, in the twinkling of an eye, he raises himself erect out of

⁸⁵ *Edinburgh Star* 6 September 1816.

⁸⁶ *Edinburgh Star* 6 September 1816.

⁸⁷ *Times* 26 November 1810; *Examiner* 14 October 1810.

⁸⁸ *Examiner* 20 January 1822.

⁸⁹ *Aberdeen Journal* 4 September 1816; *Edinburgh Advertiser* 6 September 1816; *Edinburgh Star* 6 September 1816.

the water, and scuds along as if nothing had happened'.⁹⁰ Clearly impressed by Zakæus's skill in handling a harpoon, the *Caledonian Mercury* reported: 'He can, with the greatest indifference, strike a ship-biscuit floating in the water, and split it at the distance of 30 yards'.⁹¹ The text accompanying Lizars's engraving praises Zakæus for more than just his physical prowess and skills going on to acknowledge his capacity for language, his prior education and his knowledge of history and geography:

He has made considerable progress already in speaking, reading and writing of the English language. He says he was at School in his own country; had read of England; and he is even acquainted with several Historical Facts. When shewn a representation of an Elephant, he was much delighted, and said he had heard of the animal, but had never seen a likeness of it before.

In addition to reception, the circumstances of Zakæus's exhibition appear to have been different from the nature of typical shows of living 'savages', which were most often backed by 'showmen' and clear profiteer takers who brought individuals to Europe for the specific purpose of displaying them. Zakæus seems to have come to Scotland at his own initiative, where he lived largely independently. Neither was his identity defined solely by his performances, which seem to have been only an initial, and indeed minor, part of his experiences in Britain.

According to the *Edinburgh Star*, 'handbills' were circulated prior to Zakæus's performances, 'giving notice, that he is to exhibit himself, and some curiosities from his native country, for a few days, to enable him to provide clothes and other necessities he stands in need of, as he must remain in this country till the return of the ship next year'.⁹² This suggests a modest enterprise; Captain Newton, Wood & Co. were first and foremost involved in the whaling industry and, in addition to finding a way for Zakæus to pay for his stay in Scotland, they may have wanted to make up the costs of having had an extra passenger onboard. Newton, who would almost certainly have been familiar with the Inuit's skills from his previous trips to Greenland, may thus have come up with the idea of the performances and helped to

⁹⁰ *Aberdeen Journal* 4 September 1816.

⁹¹ *Caledonian Mercury* 2 September 1816.

⁹² *Edinburgh Star* 3 September 1816.

organise them. This does not mean that they did not attempt to seize upon an opportunity to profit off of Zakæus – at the same time, there is no strong evidence to indicate outright exploitation.

Moreover, Zakæus was not stuck in the role of ‘Esquimaux’ performer, and may even have been able to make use of the public’s fascination for ‘savages’ to his own advantage. While his shows in Edinburgh initially provided the means to cover his living costs, his Inuit identity later led to him studying drawing with Nasmyth as well as a visit to London followed by paid employment as the interpreter on Ross’s First Voyage.⁹³ When the expedition returned, the Admiralty acknowledged Zakæus’s merits and had planned to further support his education with the intention that he would work for them in the future.⁹⁴ Zakæus apparently agreed to this arrangement and, ‘at his own request’, returned to Edinburgh where it seems he resumed the life he had been living there previously. Hall’s account gives the impression that Zakæus enjoyed quite an independent existence in Edinburgh; he had his own home, pursued his interests and autonomously decided the content of his education.⁹⁵ In addition to taking up drawing ‘in a more methodical manner’ with Nasmyth, Zakæus also ‘modelled’ and carved ‘canoes’ and, according to Hall, ‘took much pleasure in walking about, and paying visits’.⁹⁶ Hall also writes that Zakæus exchanged lessons in Greenlandic for instruction in English with a student in theology.⁹⁷

The degree to which Nasmyth’s portrait succeeds or not in capturing and conveying any of this highly intriguing – if, regrettably, sparsely documented – personal story is of course debatable. It does seem unfair however to dismiss the portrait outright as, on the one hand, simply an ethnographic study or, on the other, as a generic representation of a ‘Noble Savage’. The truth is most likely found somewhere in between, with the painting also presenting and indeed celebrating the uniqueness and

⁹³ As seen from Ross’s account, Zakæus was paid three pounds a month. This was the same salary as the thirty-one able seamen were given and two pounds more than the three ‘privates’ that took part in the expedition. Ross, 1819, p. xiv.

⁹⁴ Hall, 1819, p. 657; Ross, 1819, p. xxxii.

⁹⁵ Hall, 1819, p. 658.

⁹⁶ Hall, 1819, p. 657.

⁹⁷ Hall, 1819, p. 657.

personality of a named individual who was directly involved in the earliest expeditions of Britain's reopened quest to find a Northwest Passage. Although Zakæus's opinion of Nasmyth's portrait, just like that of Nasmyth himself, is unrecoverable from the available sources, the painting seems to present a strong, determined and independent person who was respected and valued as he was and painted as a personal acquaintance and, perhaps even, an equal.

An Alternative Perspective on the Arctic

According to Hall, Nasmyth became aware of Zakæus's interest in and talent for drawing soon after they met, 'finding that he had not only a taste for drawing, but considerable readiness of execution'.⁹⁸ Whether inspired by the brief period of instruction he received from Nasmyth or following up on a previous interest, Zakæus in any case continued drawing while on Ross's First Voyage when he apparently practiced by copying 'such prints of single figures, or ships, as he could procure'.⁹⁹ Although no direct documentation of Zakæus's collection of drawings seems to have survived, a print based on one of his drawings was published in Ross's 1819 narrative, making it one of the earliest images of the Arctic and exploration to circulate in the nineteenth century (**Fig. 4.15**). Titled *First Communication*, which is of course the title Ross would assign to his drawing of a similar event during his Second Voyage twelve years later, it shows the expedition's encounter with the Inughuit in the area around Cape York, named Prince Regents Bay by Ross – an event in which Zakæus played a crucial role.

In her brief analysis of *First Communication*, Bodil Kaalund suggests that the print is a combination of Inuit and European approaches. She argues that the way in which

⁹⁸ Hall, 1819, p. 656.

⁹⁹ Ross, 1819, p. 87. Zakæus may have worked with carvings and engravings while still living in Greenland, skills that might have transferred readily enough to drawing on paper. Moreover, through his contact with the Danish missionaries prior to his stay in Britain, Zakæus may have acquired European drawing materials, which may further explain his easiness and ability at drawing when he met Nasmyth.

the print is composed was most likely something Zakæus had been taught, probably through contact with Nasmyth and from what he had seen of European art, as Inuit visual representations did not use central perspective.¹⁰⁰ At the same time, the print seems rooted in the various artistic traditions of Zakæus's culture, which had a great production of masks, sculptures, embroideries, beaded jewellerys and engravings. While Inuit women commonly created embroideries on animal skins with needles and beads, the men typically engraved figurative images using a knife on tusks, bones or small pieces of wood, rubbing soot mixed with oil into the scratches.¹⁰¹ Despite the potential shift in media to drawing on paper, Kaalund believes that Zakæus's artistic heritage is expressed through the print's strong sense of storytelling: 'Everything in the picture tells of a meeting. The lines meet, the ships arriving from the left, the sleds from the right, and on the white backdrop of the ice the historic tableau unfolds'.¹⁰²

First Communication is based on a field drawing that Zakæus was meant to have composed while in Qimusseriarsuaq on 10 August 1818, the same day he had managed to establish contact with the Inughuit – a people who had apparently been living in almost total isolation, including from other groups of Inuit.¹⁰³ According to Ross, the print subsequently published in the expedition account of his First Voyage was meant to be as exact a replica as possible of Zakæus's original. The commentary Ross provided for the print makes it somewhat unclear what purpose Ross intended it to serve, situating it somewhat uneasily between an illustration of an important event or evidence of the surprising capabilities of a 'savage': 'As he never received any hint, or assistance, in this performance, a correct copy has been subjoined, without the slightest variation from the original, the scale only being reduced to

¹⁰⁰ Kaalund, 1983, pp. 33, 158-159.

¹⁰¹ Kaalund, 1983, p. 154.

¹⁰² Kaalund, 1983, p. 158.

¹⁰³ Ross, 1819, p. 87. According to ethnographer Rolf Gilberg, this group had been isolated for so long from other Inuit peoples that they thought they were the only people in the universe when Ross's expedition met them in 1818. Apparently, they also had no knowledge of how to build a kayak and had never seen a ship before. Gilberg, 1995, pp. 290, 295.

accommodate the size of the work'.¹⁰⁴ Regardless of what Ross's opinions may have been, the re-presentation of Zakæus's drawing fits within the particular category of 'encounter scenes' discussed previously. However, the print may – despite its reproduction by a British engraver – offer different dimensions and points of view to those typically found in this category of exploration imagery.

The link between *First Communication* and Greenland Inuit artistic traditions might be more thoroughgoing than Kaalund's overall observation that the print shows a narrative of a meeting. Inuit engravings on bone or ivory often employ a form of visual storytelling, showing a series of actions progressing from one side of the image to the other. The 'frieze'-like patterning typical for bone and ivory engravings is also recognisable in Inuit paintings and drawings from the first half of the nineteenth century, such as watercolours by Israil Gormansen (1804-1857), one of the first named artists in Greenland. Gormansen's *Coming Home from the Caribou Hunt* for example is comprised of two scenes; in the lower half of the composition the hunters creep along the ground, advancing upon their prey from behind a bush or rock (**Fig. 4.16**). The scene above shows a row of men, women and children carrying large packs of what might be equipment for a hunting camp or caribou meat. Another of Gormansen's watercolours, *Seal-hunting from Kayaks*, shows the same basic pattern of two horizontally oriented compositions positioned one over the other (**Fig. 4.17**).

Like Gormansen's watercolours, the reproduction of Zakæus's field drawing might potentially be read as a sequence of events progressing from the ships' arrival on the left side of the composition to the first meeting between the officers and Inughuit depicted to the right. This reading of the print would correspond with Ross's account of the event it illustrates. According to Ross's published narrative of his First Voyage, it took his expedition two days before eventually making contact:

August 9 [...] The ships had made very little progress, when we were surprised by the appearance of several men on the ice, who were hallooing, as we imagined, to the ships [...] On approaching the ice, we discovered them to

¹⁰⁴ Ross, 1819, p. 87.

be natives, drawn on rudely-fashioned sledges, by dogs, which they continued to drive backwards and forwards with wonderful rapidity [...] For some time they continued to regard us in silence, but, on the ships' tacking, they set up a simultaneous shout, accompanied with many strange gesticulations, and went off in their sledges with amazing velocity towards the land.¹⁰⁵

After the Inughuit disappeared, the expedition's crew placed an 'observation-stool [...] on the ice', filled with 'various presents, consisting of knives and articles of clothing'.¹⁰⁶ After a number of similar attempts to attract and establish contact with the Inughuit, and with all the gifts still untouched the next day, Ross decided to send Zakæus out to try to communicate with them:

August 10. About ten o'clock this day, we were rejoiced to see eight sledges, driven by the natives, advancing by a circuitous route towards the place where we lay; they halted about a mile from us, and the people alighting, ascended a small iceberg, as if to reconnoitre [...] a white flag was hoisted at the main in each ship, and John Sacheuse despatched, bearing a small white flag, with some presents, that he might endeavour, if possible, to bring them to a parley [...] Sacheuse, not intimidated, told them he was also a man and a friend, and, at the same time, threw across the canal some strings of beads and a chequed shirt; but these they beheld with great distrust and apprehension, still calling "Go away, don't kill us." Sacheuse now threw them an English knife [...] On this they approached with caution, picked up the knife, then shouted and pulled their noses [...] They now began to ask many questions¹⁰⁷

Some moments after Zakæus had left the ship, Ross impatiently decided to go ashore and communicate directly with the Inughuit himself:

The hope of getting some important information, as well as the interest naturally felt for these poor creatures, made me impatient to communicate with them myself; and I therefore desired Lieutenant Parry to accompany me to the place where the party were assembled [...] We accordingly provided ourselves with additional presents, consisting of looking-glasses and knives, together with some caps and shirts, and proceeded towards the spot, where the conference was held with increased energy.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁵ Ross, 1819, 80.

¹⁰⁶ Ross, 1819, 81.

¹⁰⁷ Ross, 1819, 82-84.

¹⁰⁸ Ross, 1819, 86.

First Communication appears to be a composite of the various events that occurred on 9 and 10 August 1818. The two small figures positioned directly to the right of the larger ship and above the whale tails, are most likely the men first spotted by the expedition on 9 August. If this is the case, then the right side of the composition would seem to show what happened the next day. Following this logic, the group of figures positioned further toward the background probably represents the first meeting that occurred between Zakæus – dressed in naval uniform and holding out a shirt – and the Inughuit, who were at this time ‘generally keeping one hand down by their knees, in readiness to pull out a knife which they had in their boots [...] their sledges remained at a little distance [...] in readiness for escape’.¹⁰⁹ The final group of figures positioned closest to the viewer would then be the result of Zakæus’s initial negotiations, with the contrasting way in which the Inughuit are represented – standing upright, holding knives that Ross and Parry had given them while offering narwhale horns in return and finally, no longer having a sled ready for escape – confirming that peaceful relations had now been established.

As discussed previously in this thesis, encounter scenes such as those by Webber for Cook’s voyages were often constructed out of events and visual elements that were not necessarily connected in space and time, with the final composition generally giving the illusion of a single moment at a specific location.¹¹⁰ While *First Communication* seems similarly pieced together, the suggestion is that the print is not meant to be read as a fixed, if imaginary, moment in time but rather as at least three separate events that happened in succession. The use of perspective in the print – if this was in fact a feature of Zakæus’s original field drawing – might then take on a special significance, blending together Inuit traditions for visual storytelling with European representational techniques to arrive at a synthesis that testifies to the ways in which Zakæus himself lived and moved in both cultures. The three separate groupings of figures appearing in *First Communication* might productively be understood as equivalent to the stacked lines of activity making up both of Gormansen’s watercolours, which appear to show linked events happening over

¹⁰⁹ Ross, 1819, 85.

¹¹⁰ See the discussion in chapter three of Webber’s *Captain Cook in Ship Cove, Queen Charlotte Sound* of 1777.

time. Instead of the flat composition employed by Gormansen, the use of perspective in *First Communication* seems to mark the passing of time, with the figures positioned closer to the foreground not only growing in size but representing events that occurred closer to the present.

Compared to exploration imagery from the Arctic, *First Communication* suggests a different interest in and relationship to the region. Despite the fact that the encounter between Ross's First Voyage and the Inughuit living in the area around Cape York seems to have been a tense and uncertain moment, with Zakæus having been on the front line, the resulting print of this experience represented the Arctic in an aesthetic way. *First Communication* displays great attention to the different forms and colours of the ice, cliffs and mountains in the background, combining this interest in the natural environment with detailed ethnographic representation of both Inughuit and British material culture – such as clothing, dog-sleds, and the vessels and their intricate riggings. In its apparent emphasis on a shared ethic, peaceful encounter and mutual understanding between two cultures meeting for the first time, *First Communication* at least partly recalls the Cook/Webber visual arts programme of the previous century. There seems to be one key difference, however, as now the 'native interpreter' is fully involved in the history of exploration; taking on the role usually reserved for captains, Zakæus is both a central actor in and narrator of discovery; this was not only one of the first expeditions to be sent to the Arctic in 1818, it was importantly the first to meet with a previously unknown group of Inuit in the nineteenth century.

A Portrait of Qalasirssuaq or Erasmus Augustine Kallihirua

Sometime in the late nineteenth-century, the Greenwich Hospital Collection received from Erasmus Ommanney the gift of an oil painting showing a young Inughuit man, both *en face* and in profile, on a brown neutral background (**Fig. 4.18**). Although the painting and date of this portrait are unknown, its connection to Ommanney – who wished for it to be displayed in the Royal Navy Museum at the Royal Naval College

in Greenwich – suggests he may have commissioned it and that it was almost certainly painted during Qalasirssuaq's stay in Britain. Measuring 63.4 x 76.2 cm, the portrait shows Qalasirssuaq with combed hair and shining face, dressed in a dark suit, white shirt and black scarf, calmly and confidently meeting the viewer's gaze. The finished quality of the painting and its execution on canvas, together with its size, makes it appear to be a portrait – meant for display – of a distinguished individual, family member or friend. It further contains no clear references to the Arctic; while the sitter's ethnicity is certainly not European, it is by no means obviously Inuit. In addition, the absence of any signifiers of material culture separates the painting from traditional ethnographic interest in dress and adornment.

At the same time, the choice to represent Qalasirssuaq from two angles complicates an understanding of this painting as an intimate and personal portrayal, somehow disinterested in ethnicity. While Qalasirssuaq's European clothing does seem to announce him as a fully integrated member of British society, this message is disrupted by the use of the two simultaneous poses. Although the painting was perhaps intended for use in the production of a sculpture, it seems to draw explicitly on the physiognomical logic and representational language of the new life sciences, thus separating Qalasirssuaq from society by demarcating his 'racial' difference.¹¹¹ These competing and mixed signals appear to link to the ways in which Qalasirssuaq himself was most likely caught, from the moment his life intersected with Britain's Arctic project in the mid nineteenth century, between contradictory impulses to both assimilate him and keep him at a distance.

'A Specimen of Polar Humanity'

Upon Qalasirssuaq's arrival in Woolwich in 1851, the British press exhibited a keen interest in his physical appearance – in fact, articles and announcements covering the return of Austin's search expedition seem to have been more concerned about the

¹¹¹ Examples of paintings produced for this purpose include Anthony van Dyck's 1635 portrait of King Charles I (Royal Art Collection, London) and Philippe de Champaigne's 1642 portrait of Cardinal Richelieu (London, National Gallery).

‘Esquimaux’ than the fact that Austin’s four ships had been, except for a rake discovered on Cape Riley, unsuccessful in finding any trace of Franklin.¹¹² If the press were obsessed with this rake, said to be about fourteen feet long with six five inch teeth, of the type used in the collection of seaweed, they were equally concerned with Qalasirssuaq, who was most often referred to as ‘the Esquimaux’. One of the first reports on Austin’s return, published in the *Morning Chronicle* on 8 October, commented and speculated on his age, native home, clothes, bodily build, temper, height and facial features:

Captain Ommaney has also brought home a young man, about nineteenth years of age, of the Esquimaux tribe who inhabit the country beyond Cape York, and near to the place where the North Star wintered in 1849. The Esquimaux youth is clothed in the same kind of costume as the other sailors, and appears remarkably good tempered and stout for his height, with a face of an Asiatic cast, nearly like the face of persons of Chinese origin, but very flat, and more round. The Esquimaux is very much attached to Captain Ommaney, and has been Erasmus York, after the gallant officer who brought him to this country, and the name of the Cape where he came from.¹¹³

The same passage circulated in several newspapers and, when Ommaney appeared at the Great Exhibition in London with Qalasirssuaq only a couple of days later, the press were again concerned with reporting his physical appearance.¹¹⁴ Recycling from the *Daily News*, the *Glasgow Herald* labelled Qalasirssuaq a ‘specimen of Polar humanity’, describing him as ‘a stiff built little fellow, about five feet high, with fine dark eyes and a rather pleasing countenance. Judging from his complexion it would appear that the polar snows and frosts are as active in tanning the human skin as is the sun of the tropics’.¹¹⁵

¹¹² *Morning Chronicle* 8 October 1851; *Liverpool Mercury* 10 October 1851; *Examiner* 11 October 1851; *Reynold's Newspaper* 12 October 1851. The rake was in addition only possibly a remnant from Franklin’s expedition.

¹¹³ *Morning Chronicle* 8 October 1851.

¹¹⁴ *Liverpool Mercury* 10 October 1851; *Examiner* 11 October 1851; *Reynold's Newspaper* 12 October 1851. *Liverpool Mercury* 10 October 1851; *Examiner* 11 October 1851; *Reynold's Newspaper* 12 October 1851; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* 12 October 1851.

¹¹⁵ *Daily News* 11 October 1851; *Glasgow Herald* 13 October 1851.

The fascination shared by the press for Qalasirssuaq's physical appearance seems indicative of the strong influence physiognomy and phrenology were having on European society, including of course art, at the time.¹¹⁶ When Qalasirssuaq arrived in England physiognomy was in fact fully enmeshed with aesthetics, and the portrait painted of him can be situated in a broader climate of popular and professional art criticism that – as Mary Cowling has demonstrated – expected accurate physiognomical depictions of social and racial types. Indeed, an article published in the *Art Journal* in 1852, the year after Qalasirssuaq landed in Woolwich, urged every painter to be a phrenologist.¹¹⁷ Over the next three decades, questions concerning the relationship between physical appearance and mental character would repeatedly surface in debates about and the evaluation of works of art.

Cowling has discussed for example a review published in the *Art Journal* of Frederic Leighton's *David* of 1865, which apparently criticised the painting for its 'badly' rendered head. The issue was not that it was poorly executed or physically incorrect, but that Leighton had chosen a head shape in no way suited to that of a biblical hero (**Fig. 4.19**). According to the *Art Journal* it was 'a physiological fact, that a head so small, with a brow so receding, could not have belonged to any man who has made himself so conspicuous in the world's history'.¹¹⁸ In 1868, reviews of William Holman Hunt's *Isabella and the Pot of Basil* similarly drew on physiognomy and phrenology to discuss the merits and credibility of the work (**Fig. 4.20**). In the painting, which takes its inspiration from an 1818 narrative poem by John Keats, Isabella rests her head on a garden pot containing a basil plant and her lover Lorenzo's head, which she had retrieved by digging up his grave and cutting off his head after discovering where her brothers had killed and buried him. Although art critics could not agree whether Hunt was giving a correct portrayal of Isabella, they all thought Hunt had successfully represented an ugly woman whose dark complexion, large feet and unappealing facial features suggested a correspondingly violent character.¹¹⁹ One critic declared that her 'undeveloped face' and eyes

¹¹⁶ Cowling, 1989, p. 54; Pinney, 1997, p. 51.

¹¹⁷ Cowling, 1989, p. 104.

¹¹⁸ The *Art Journal* quoted in Cowling, 1989, p. 107.

¹¹⁹ Cowling, 1989, 113.

revealed a ‘very vicious and very violent temper’ that appalled him. Another critic argued that this ‘dark and vehement’ woman was precisely the type of person capable of cutting off Lorenzo’s head.¹²⁰

Douglas Druick and Peter Zegers have used reviews of Edgar Degas’s work to similar ends.¹²¹ Two pastel drawings of 1880, both of which are entitled *Criminal Physiognomy* and displayed at the sixth Impressionist exhibition of 1881, show a total of three men who tried for murder in the late 1870s (**Figs. 4.21, 4.22**). Based on sketches Degas originally made during the trial, these works were praised by art critics for their ‘physiologic soundness’ and for successfully capturing the ‘stains of vice’ – in the logic of the time, darker skin colour, low foreheads and protruding noses and mouths.¹²² The majority of Parisian art critics expressed similar opinions about the girl in Degas’s sculpture, *The Little Fourteen-Year-Old dancer* of 1879-1881 (**Fig. 4.23**). Due to her physique and the shape of her head and face, the girl was variously viewed as a ‘sister’ to one of the criminals in Degas’s pastel drawings, a ‘monkey’ or an ‘Aztec’, with her features apparently expressing a predisposition to bestiality.¹²³

In this context, the portrait of Qalasirssuaq seems to reflect both popular and artistic thinking of the time, which had by mid century comfortably absorbed the logic of physiognomy and phrenology.¹²⁴ While the reviews of Leighton’s and Hunt’s works, as well as Degas’s *The Little Fourteen-Year-Old Dancer*, situate them in relationship

¹²⁰ R. St John Tyrwhitt and B. Cracroft quoted in Cowling, 1989, 113.

¹²¹ Druick and Zegers, 1988.

¹²² Druick and Zegers, 1988, p. 209.

¹²³ Druick and Zegers, 1988, pp. 209-210.

¹²⁴ Cowling, 1989, p. 78. In her thorough study of the impact of physiognomy and phrenology on nineteenth-century art in Britain, Cowling mentions another three texts concerned with the application of these sciences to the production of art: Benjamin Robert Haydon’s two-volume *Lectures on Painting* of 1844, George Elgar Hick’s *Guide to Figure Drawing* of 1854 and George Combe’s *Phrenology Applied to Painting and Sculpture* of 1855. In demonstrating the influence physiognomy and phrenology had on the public in general, Cowling refers to a passage in Charlotte Brontë’s 1847 *Jane Eyre*, wherein the protagonist – upon examining the forehead of her employer – notes ‘a mass of intellectual organs, but an abrupt deficiency where the suave sign of benevolence should have risen’. Cowling, 1989, pp. 45, 58-60, 74, 78.

to physiognomy and phrenology, none of them obviously express such ideas on their own. The painting of Qalasirssuaq on the other hand seems more clearly involved in science, as is suggested by its similarity with Degas's *Criminal Physiognomy* – wherein meaning is expressed already in the title – and its use of two angles, a representational mode used already by Lavater and Spurzheim (**Figs. 4.24**).

Qalasirssuaq's profile shows a similar outline of the face to the three heads drawn by Degas; in all cases the mouth and jaw protrude more than the forehead, which is rather low and receding. This particular facial profile – often referred to as the prognathous type – was generally associated with, as in a print illustrating 'Camper's System' and 'Blumenbach's Vetical Line' published in *The Phrenological Almanac* of 1842, people assumed to be mentally undeveloped whether 'savages' or European outcasts (**Fig. 4.25**).¹²⁵ Following the logic of the time, the choice to paint Qalasirssuaq in rigid profile thus seems to place him – whether intentionally or not – in the same category as 'idiots' and animals.

The use of double portraits would go on to become common practice in later scientific representations of non-Western individuals, with single 'specimens' often being used to document the head shape that was meant to be characteristic for an entire people. The work of W. E. Marshall is one example, with his 1873 book *A Phrenologist Amongst the Todas* including two pairs of photographs showing Toda individuals – one man and one woman – pictured in full face and profile on a single page against a measured grid background (**Fig. 4.26**).¹²⁶ E. T. Dalton's *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* of 1872 includes multiple plates of individuals from various tribes, at least nine of which employ a very similar representational formula.

Combined together into a single image, a double photograph titled *Abor Chief* seems – like the images in Marshall's work – anticipated by the portrait of Qalasirssuaq suggesting that the intention with this painting was to capture a definitive sample of the Inuit head shape (**Fig. 4.27**).

¹²⁵ Faulkner, 1842.

¹²⁶ Pinney, 1997.

While the context for the portrait of Qalasirssuaq cannot be established with certainty, another image made explicit use of him as a representative specimen. In 1855 a print based on a photograph of Qalasirssuaq – now presumed lost – appeared as an illustration in the fourth edition of James C. Prichard’s *The Natural History of Man*, showing Qalasirssuaq in full face turned only slightly in profile (**Fig. 4.28**).¹²⁷ Like the double portrait of Qalasirssuaq, this illustration – which was the only image featured in Prichard’s short account of the ‘Esquimaux’ – showed him wearing what looks to be the same suit worn in the painting, again with short, combed hair. After commenting that ‘The description given by Crantz of the Greenlanders may well apply to the whole race’, Prichard goes on to include a passage – in French – attributed to M. Charlevoix that sets up a very peculiar contrast between text and image. Although Qalasirssuaq seems to be presented as a ‘civilised’ person, taking part fully in European society at the time, Prichard’s text argues precisely the opposite. Via Charlevoix, Qalasirssuaq suddenly becomes visual evidence of the ‘savage’ appearance and manners of all ‘Esquimaux’: ‘Their habits and their characters are completely in accordance with the bad looking physiognomy. They are ferocious, belligerent, defiant, anxious, always inclined to harm strangers’.¹²⁸ The way in which the print in Prichard’s book was set in relationship to such notions calls into question the motives of the double portrait painted of Qalasirssuaq, suggesting that no matter how civilised an Inuit appeared, they were at best a wild ‘savage’ in disguise.

Civilising Savages

Surviving documents connected to Qalasirssuaq’s time onboard the *HMS Assistance* as part of Austin’s search expedition between mid August 1850 and early October 1851 reveal an intellectual climate among Austin’s officers that reflected the currents of the time and, more particularly, was concerned with the origin and variety of humankind, as well as the intelligence level and development of ‘savages’. A

¹²⁷ Prichard, 1855, pp. 517-519.

¹²⁸ Prichard, 1855, pp. 517-518.

newspaper edited by an officer on Ommanney's vessel while Austin's expedition was in winter quarters reveals a running debate between at least three officers about the origins of the 'Esquimaux' and the character of their 'race'. Entitled *Aurora Borealis*, the newspaper featured three articles by one of the ship's officers who wrote under the pseudonym 'Clio' (in Greek mythology, the muse for history). Authoritatively explaining where the Greenland Inuit came from, why they had ended up in the Arctic, how and why they differed from the 'Normans' and what characterised their religion, Clio's texts stirred something of a discussion, soliciting responses from two other officers using the pennames 'Examiner' and 'Scriblerus'.¹²⁹

Drawing on the works of Cuvier, these officers – if not embracing a polygenist view – clearly believed in rigid hierarchical divisions that separated the Inuit, in particular, from Europeans.¹³⁰ This is evident in the writings of Clio for example who, while recognising the role played by the environment in shaping the unique characteristics of all peoples, stated that the 'Mongolians' – a race to which the Inuit belonged – were biologically more susceptible to external influences than others.¹³¹ Building on this claim, Clio went on to argue for the very inferior state of living Inuit, concluding that their inherent vulnerability had resulted in severe degeneration:

The Mongolian tribes are apparently more capable of being operated upon by the effects of climate and the nature of the country they inhabit, than any of the other races of mankind [...] where the Mongolians have penetrated beyond the Arctic Circle, and spread themselves across the frozen shores of the American continent, they have lost both the civilization of the Chinese and the warlike bravery of the Tartar. Stunted in growth, and deficient in intellect the Esquimaux (of course with all due deference to the feelings of Erasmus York) has no thought, but for the gratification of his passions, no wish but to save himself from starvation.¹³²

¹²⁹ Clio, 1852a; Clio, 1852b; Clio, 1852c; Examiner, 1852a; Examiner, 1852b; Scriblerus, 1852.

¹³⁰ Scriblerus, 1852, p. 150; Examiner, 1852a, p. 88. Cuvier suggested that racial differences were more or less permanent. Stocking, 1987, pp. 26, 50; Cuvier, 1834, p. 40. See also chapter one of this thesis.

¹³¹ Clio, 1852a; Clio, 1852b.

¹³² Clio, 1852a, pp. 43-44.

Clio – like the officers who responded to his article – was aware of Qalasirssuaq’s presence on the expedition, something he made rather clear in this passage. Yet, although it was likely that Qalasirssuaq would have had access to the content of *Aurora Borealis*, it seems Clio did not think twice about making his very low opinion about the Inuit publicly known. By contrast, he continued in the same vein in two other articles. Comparing the Greenland Inuit to the Norse settlers of Greenland during the Viking era, Clio posited a biological, permanent and hierarchical difference between European and Inuit peoples:

It is deeply interesting to observe how one race of humankind, labouring under the most disadvantageous circumstances, with regard to climate and an inhospitable and barren country, has struggled against these evils, and to a certain extent overcome them; while another in the same predicament has sunk into the most degraded state of barbarity. Such has always been the difference between the Caucasian and Mongolian races, a difference which, even if their physical conformation, and especially the shape of their skulls, did not at once stamp them as another race, would alone suffice to distinguish them.¹³³

Clio’s persistent relegation of Qalasirssuaq’s people to an eternal state of ‘barbarism’ is again articulated in his final article for *Aurora Borealis*. Describing Inuit religion as an absurd superstition, Clio goes on to claim that the apparent ‘indifference and obstinacy’ of the Greenlanders had caused severe problems for the German missionaries who tried to convert them to Christianity.¹³⁴

While these notions clearly separated the Inuit from Europeans, it seems that Austin’s expedition also tried to make Qalasirssuaq feel included – although the goal with this may have been to assimilate him. He received lessons in writing English for example, and also took part in the activities of the expedition, including a fancy dress ball given onboard the *HMS Resolute* – one of the other vessels – while the expedition was in winter quarters.¹³⁵ According to the account given by Carl

¹³³ Clio, 1852b, p. 182.

¹³⁴ Clio, 1852c, p. 245.

¹³⁵ Information on Qalasirssuaq’s participation in the social environment of the expedition is found in another article that, supposedly written by Qalasirssuaq, featured in the *Aurora Borealis*. The article is problematic as a source because it is unknown who the real author is and what Qalasirssuaq’s involvement in its creation

Petersen – a Dane living in Greenland who worked as an interpreter – of Qalasirssuaq’s time onboard the *HMS Assistance*, he had to change his clothes after joining Austin’s expedition, in something of a rite of assimilation: ‘I told him that he had to keep himself clean and tidy and that he would be dressed in the white people’s dress – “Yes,” said he, “so shall my hair in the same way be cut off”. The chap, whose current name was Kalersik, was now honoured with the name “Erasmus York”’.¹³⁶ Cutting Qalasirssuaq’s hair and washing and dressing him in sailor’s clothes, like giving him a British nickname, may have been simply disciplinary – that is, to apply to him the same rules to which all the crew were subjected. However, such measures most likely took on an added dimension and purpose when Inuit guides like Qalasirssuaq were brought to Britain. This is what is suggested in Alexander M’Donald’s biography of Eenoolooapik for example, an Inuk from Baffin’s Island who accompanied William Penny, a whaling captain, to Aberdeen in 1839 and later went on to guide Penny in the rediscovery of Cumberland Sound.¹³⁷ Illustrated with a frontispiece showing ‘Eenoo’ dressed in European clothes with short, combed and neatly parted hair, M’Donald’s account gives a description of the Inuk’s first week onboard Penny’s vessel that makes rather clear the ideologies to which a haircut and change of clothes might be aligned (**Fig. 4.29**):

During the homeward passage every care was taken to instruct him in the usages of civilized society; and aided by the faculty of imitation [...] he adopted the manners of those around him [...] Every attention was bestowed to prevent his morals being contaminated by intercourse with the vicious; and this was the more necessary, as the first impressions made upon a mind emerging from the gloom of savage ignorance, were likely to be permanent [...] At first he was rather averse to the change of dress which it was

might have been. It is further unclear whether the text is making fun of Qalasirssuaq or conversely, criticising the explorers’ attitudes through what superficially comes across as a rather naïve and somewhat incoherent account of Qalasirssuaq’s reflections. Although it cannot be used as an authentic record in any way representative of Qalasirssuaq’s thoughts, the article provides some basic information about his stay with the expedition. York, 1852.

¹³⁶ Petersen, 1857, p. 35. Translation from Danish by author.

¹³⁷ ‘Eenoo’ had agreed to go to Britain to help Penny in convincing the government to provide the captain with financial support to explore the west side of Davis Strait for an inlet – Cumberland Sound – abounding with whales. M’Donald, 1841, pp. i, 10; Jones, 2004, p. 8.

necessary he should adopt [...] He soon acquired habits of extreme personal cleanliness¹³⁸

The adoption of European dress and habits thus appears to have been a first and important step in what was, consciously or not, a British civilising mission. When Austin's expedition came back to Britain, Qalasirssuaq played an important function in current debates within the Admiralty, which may offer another perspective on the change to his outer appearance. In October 1851, following the conclusion of the latest round of searches, the Admiralty created an Arctic committee that looked at reports from various search expeditions in order to establish how best to proceed with the task of finding Franklin.¹³⁹ An important feature of the committee's work was the investigation of a supposition put forth by John Ross's Inuit interpreter Adam Beck that the Inughuit had murdered Franklin's crew. Although Austin's officers were convinced already in the Arctic that there was no evidence to substantiate Beck's claims, they may have anticipated that a hearing might be held upon their return especially since Ross, who had been present at Cape York with his own search expedition, supported Beck.¹⁴⁰ In this context Qalasirssuaq served as a key witness, with the positioning of one 'civilised savage' against another revealing that notions of 'civilised' were conditional for Inuit people and a label that, when more convenient, could be easily reversed.

Documents related to the 1850-51 search expeditions show that Beck, despite being both Christian and literate, was rather unfavourably contrasted with Qalasirssuaq. Austin, Petersen and other members of Austin's expedition branded Beck a liar,

¹³⁸ M'Donald, 1841, p. 10.

¹³⁹ *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* 19 October 1851.

¹⁴⁰ While in the Cape York region, Ommanney and Captain William Penny sailed to the place where the murders were supposed to have taken place and, following their investigation, they wrote separately to Austin and the Admiralty, informing them that Beck's claims were unfounded. Penny, 1851 [21 August 1850]; Ommanney, 1851 [17 August 1850]; NMM HSR/C/6 Ommanney, 10 September 1850. Ross on the other hand did not think the investigation made by Ommanney and Penny was good enough to justify a total dismissal of Beck's statements. In a letter published in *The Daily News* on 4 October 1851, Ross announced his continued support for Beck, whose deposition, Ross argued, had been made on oath. *Daily News* 4 October 1851.

accusing him of intentionally deceiving and hindering the search efforts.¹⁴¹ He was described as vile, cunning, calculating and mischievous – in short, and in Austin’s words, ‘about the worst [...] civilized savage’ imaginable.¹⁴² Thus, although Ross was adamant in his support of Beck, his positive description came to hold true for Qalasirssuaq alone: ‘what Adam Beck has deposed is true, as he was born in Greenland, was brought up a Christian, can both read and write, is well-informed in the nature of an oath, and its consequences, and that, under such circumstances, the natives have never been known to swear falsely’.¹⁴³

This, it seems, was precisely the message a print of Qalasirssuaq featured on the front page of the *Illustrated London News* on 25 October 1851 was meant to communicate (**Fig. 4.30**). Based on a daguerreotype by Richard Beard, it showed Qalasirssuaq dressed in sailor’s clothes and holding a hat inscribed with the name of Ommanney’s ship.¹⁴⁴ Seated on a chair with a serious expression on his face, Qalasirssuaq looks no different than any other British shipmate. In the accompanying article, Qalasirssuaq and the Inughuit were described as a simple and honest people; they were said to be shy and easily scared, yet at the same time completely trusting of unknown visitors – the opposite, in other words, of Prichard’s entry in *The Natural History of Man*. Claiming that Qalasirssuaq had happily forsaken his ‘primitive’ home for the advantages of a ‘civilised’ existence among the British, a culture he was said to have readily embraced, the *Illustrated London News* additionally described how his compassion and ‘amiable disposition’ had made him highly popular with the crew.¹⁴⁵ This and other representations of Qalasirssuaq circulating in the press at the time may thus have played at least some part in convincing both the public and the Admiralty of Qalasirssuaq’s trustworthiness and, by extension, that Beck’s story was unfounded. Already before the hearing it was in any case clear who the press and Admiralty favoured, with various newspapers recycling a passage that most likely originated in the *Daily News*: ‘Although the

¹⁴¹ Penny, 1851. Petersen, 1857, p. 36. Osborn, 1852, pp. 85-86.

¹⁴² Woodman, 1992, p. 58.

¹⁴³ *Daily News* 4 October 1851.

¹⁴⁴ Beard also photographed Franklin’s crew in 1845.

¹⁴⁵ *Illustrated London News* 25 October 1851.

story of Sir John Ross and his informer, Adam Beck, is not entertained by any official in or out of the Admiralty, it would perhaps be as well for the committee, now that they have the intelligent young Esquimaux, Erasmus York, at hand, as well as Captain Penny's able interpreter, to examine him formally on the subject'.¹⁴⁶ Against this backdrop of Admiralty intrigue, an image of a civilised 'Esquimaux' may have expressed somewhat different notions to the very similar image appearing in Prichard's *The Natural History of Man*, suggesting that the double portrait of Qalasirssuaq might have been used, and with equal success, to opposing ends.

Traces of an Arctic Voice

The apparent Europeanisation of Qalasirssuaq's outward appearance went beyond the function it may have served onboard Austin's expedition in the Arctic and the Admiralty's hearing back in England. His subsequent fate as a missionary student at St. Augustine's in Canterbury and later St. John's indicates that Qalasirssuaq was caught up in a comprehensive civilising programme. Having already cared for Qalasirssuaq 'like a father' while in the Arctic, it was Ommanney who seems to have initiated this, quickly assuming the role of Qalasirssuaq's guardian. In addition to being nicknamed after him, for example, the press typically referred to Qalasirssuaq as 'Captain Ommanney's Esquimaux'.¹⁴⁷ The surviving material documenting the relationship that developed between Ommanney and Qalasirssuaq during his time in both England and Newfoundland suggests that Ommanney may, however, have genuinely cared for Qalasirssuaq. As well as being one of the chosen witnesses for Qalasirssuaq's baptism in 1853, a number of letters of correspondence between Ommanney and various other people at St. Augustine's and St. John's testify to his continued involvement in Qalasirssuaq's life and education.¹⁴⁸ From the outset,

¹⁴⁶ *Leeds Mercury* 18 October 1851; *Hampshire Telegraph* 18 October 1851; *Northern Star* 18 October 1851; *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* 19 October 1851. The *Hampshire Telegraph* noted that its source was the *Daily News*.

¹⁴⁷ *Morning Chronicle* 2 February 1852; Petersen, 1860, p. 86.

¹⁴⁸ Murray, 1856, pp. 36, 39. CCA-U88-A5/8/1 Bailey, 16 July 1856. CCA-U88-A5/8/1 Bullock, 29 October 1851. Surviving letters of correspondence between

Ommanney was concerned that Qalasirssuaq would receive what was, in his opinion, instruction in the right faith, making sure to place Qalasirssuaq within the Anglican Church instead of amongst the Moravians.¹⁴⁹

While perhaps well intentioned, Ommanney's desires for Qalasirssuaq may on the other hand have ended up overruling Qalasirssuaq's own. In a letter dated 20 May 1853, Ommanney expresses concern for Qalasirssuaq's health and encourages him to be 'good' and diligent in his studies and behaviour. Although this could be read as innocently overbearing, Ommanney was perhaps more interested in charting his progress – that is, his ongoing development from 'savage' to 'civilised':

My dear York

You will think it being unkind of me that I did not answer your letter before [...] but the reason was that I was travelling in Ireland, which you will see in the map is a long island a long way off. I only returned home yesterday after travelling abroad for six weeks. I now have to thank you for being so good [...] to write me a letter, and I was very sorry to hear that you had been sick but hope now you are better. Will you write another letter and tell me how you are. It is a great pleasure to hear from you, and to see that you write so well. I hope you have also learnt other things as well and continue to be very good. Mrs Ommanney and the little boy are quite well, she sends her good wishes to you – Please make my compliment to the warden.¹⁵⁰

In addition to the peculiar geographical logic – namely, telling a person from Greenland that Ireland is 'a long way off' – Ommanney's somewhat patronising tone seems indicative of the captain's motives for bringing an 'Esquimaux' to England and keeping him there. As well as helping to advance Britain's empire in the Arctic by training a native missionary, Ommanney probably thought that Qalasirssuaq was best off receiving 'enlightenment' and 'civilisation' in England.

Although there are few surviving traces of Qalasirssuaq's experiences after joining Austin's expedition in 1850, these all seem to point to the fact that Qalasirssuaq was not necessarily happy to have been taken from his home in Greenland, brought to

Ommanney and various church people are kept at the Canterbury Cathedral Archives.

¹⁴⁹ CCA-U88-A5/8/1 Bullock, 29 October 1851.

¹⁵⁰ CCA-U88-A5/8/1 Ommanney, 20 May 1853.

England and then kept there for four years before being sent to live in yet another foreign environment. A poem written by one of the sailors onboard Ommanney's vessel makes this point rather explicit:

Poor lad, he strain'd his eyes in vain
Till tears began to come,
And tried if he could see again
His mother and his home

We look'd upon the swarthy lad,
Then look'd upon each other,
And all were sure that he was sad
With thinking of his mother¹⁵¹

Despite his feelings in this matter being known, no attempts were ever made to take Qalasirssuaq back to Greenland – which would certainly have been possible. The arrangements Ommanney made to place Qalasirssuaq at St. Augustine's were not, in other words, a way to find him passage home, as there were several opportunities to send him back much sooner.¹⁵² From the moment Ommanney's ship had sailed passed Cape York and failed to return him as promised, Qalasirssuaq seems to have been uncomfortable with the new life that was more or less assigned to him outside of his control. His few surviving writings make frequent reference to his poor health, with one letter in broken English dated April 1853 leaving little doubt about his circumstances: 'I be in England long time none very well – very bad weather [...] very bad cough – I very sorry – very bad. Weather dreadful. Country very different – another day cold another day [h]ot. I miserable'.¹⁵³ While slightly more optimistic, another letter from the same time addressed to Ommanney says much the same: 'I write hoping you and all my kind friends are well. Had very bad cold pain in my

¹⁵¹ Murray, 1856, p. 14 First published in *The Gospel Missionary*, 1851.

¹⁵² CCA-U88-A5/8/1 Bullock, 29 October 1851; Murray, 1856, p. 27. In addition to the British whalers that sometimes passed the Cape York region, a search expedition under E. A. Inglefield set sail for Northwest Greenland the summer after Qalasirssuaq arrived in England. Laughton and Lambert, 2004-2010; Inglefield, 1853, chapter 3.

¹⁵³ CCA-U88-A5/8/1 Qalasirssuaq, April [?] 1853.

side, bed four days, better now. Weather bad, rain very much. Hope Mrs Ommanney and little boy very well. Like to see you summer. All people very kind to me'.¹⁵⁴

Although these letters point to homesickness and a difficult experience for Qalasirssuaq in England, his time in Canterbury was not necessarily completely negative. Other surviving documents reveal that, in addition to his life at the college, Qalasirssuaq interacted with a circle of people connected to the Navy. In 1852 he spent his summer and Christmas holidays together with Captain John Washington, helping him to revise an English-‘Esquimaux’ dictionary published by the Admiralty in 1853 for the specific use of Arctic explorers.¹⁵⁵ In a letter to an unknown person in September 1854, Qalasirssuaq recounted his holiday the following summer, which he spent at Austin’s house in Southampton.¹⁵⁶ In another letter the next year Qalasirssuaq mentioned having dined with ‘the Rev [...] Mr. Gells’, the husband of John Franklin’s daughter, before leaving England for Newfoundland in 1855.¹⁵⁷ Two years earlier Franklin’s daughter had also requested to be Qalasirssuaq’s godmother for his upcoming baptism.¹⁵⁸

Qalasirssuaq also seems to have formed a friendship with at least one other student at Canterbury who was, like him, brought to Britain to be trained as a missionary. The letters of Mark Pilander Paul, a twenty-one-year-old man from India who came to St. Augustine’s in 1852, make frequent mention of Qalasirssuaq, with Paul attempting to keep in touch with Qalasirssuaq even after he had been sent to Guyana for his missionary work there.¹⁵⁹ In one letter, Paul described having seen ‘Kalli’s country’ at the Zoo for example, while another – addressed to the college’s warden –

¹⁵⁴ The date of this letter is unknown, but from Ommanney’s letter to Qalasirssuaq on 20 May 1853, it seems likely that Qalasirssuaq composed it in March or April 1853. CCA-U88-A5/8/1 Qalasirssuaq, 1853 [?].

¹⁵⁵ Washington, 1853, p. vii.

¹⁵⁶ CCA-U88-A5/8/1 Qalasirssuaq, September 1854.

¹⁵⁷ CCA-U88-A5/8/1 Qalasirssuaq, 3 October 1855.

¹⁵⁸ CCA-U88-A5/8/1 Bullock, 19 November 1853.

¹⁵⁹ CCA-U88-A2/6-C78Sa Paul, 23 March 1855.

explained how he and Qalasirssuaq prayed together and that he helped Qalasirssuaq with his English.¹⁶⁰

Kalli told me he has not got the letter yet from Southampton to go there, I told him and read the letter to him what you said to him, he understand it very well. I join with him sometimes in the evening prayers; he was rather puzzled why I should join with his private prayer [...] I have learned the little beautiful prayer from him at same day before you went, he came in my room and told me to write it, so he repeated the prayer, I wrote it down.
I go in the morning on Sunday to the school and Mr Woodalls Church, Kalli goes to St. Martin, give my and Kalli's compliment to Mrs Bailey.
Revd & Dear sir,
I remain your affectionate son &c.
Mark Pilander Paul.¹⁶¹

A final fragmentary insight into the life Qalasirssuaq may have led in Canterbury may be found in a 'memoir' written by the Reverend T. B. Murray titled *Kalli, the Esquimaux Christian*. In addition to having met Qalasirssuaq a couple of times, Murray based his account on conversations with people who had known Qalasirssuaq while he was a student at St. Augustine's. While Murray's account gives little detail in addition to the general biography of Qalasirssuaq presented previously, it does add one note of interest, describing how 'He was fond of drawing ships, and figures of the Seal, the Walrus, the Rein-deer, the Esquimaux Dog, and other objects familiar to him in the Arctic regions'.¹⁶² A similar account is given in the preface to Washington's *Greenland-Eskimo Vocabulary*, wherein Qalasirssuaq's 'great pleasure' was said 'to be a pencil and paper, with which he drew animals and ships'.¹⁶³

While this suggests that Qalasirssuaq may have produced a body of visual material during his time in Britain, there seem to be only two surviving drawings, both of which are held in the Cathedral Archives in Canterbury. One of the images is rather difficult to interpret; bearing the inscription 'buried Esquimaux', it shows two figures – both of who appear to be European women – standing by a mound of piled stones

¹⁶⁰ CCA-U88-A2/6-C78Sa Paul, 4 July 1853.

¹⁶¹ CCA-U88-A2/6-C78Sa Paul, 17 July 1854.

¹⁶² Murray, 1856, p. 34.

¹⁶³ Washington, 1853, p. vii.

(**Fig. 4.31**). One of the figures may be holding a handkerchief; the other what might be a book, presumably a bible. Both figures appear to be sad, with the caption Qalasirssuaq provided for this scene suggesting that it might represent his funeral far away from home. The other drawing shows a scene abounding with life and activity that is clearly set in Greenland (**Fig. 4.32**). Obviously rooted in Inuit artistic traditions in the same way as Gormansen's work discussed previously, the drawing shows three stacked, horizontal scenes filled with multiple Inuit figures, sleds, harpoons, a number of birds and dogs, as well as a polar bear. The overriding sense transmitted by this drawing is one of 'home', a place Qalasirssuaq not only longed for but worked to keep alive in his thoughts and imagination.

Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq: A Unified View of the Arctic?

The analysis of the portraits of Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq presented in this chapter demonstrates that representations of Inuit individuals painted in Britain between the early and mid nineteenth century cannot be straightforwardly categorised as either portraits or ethnographic images, nor easily aligned with either the positive or negative framing of 'savages'. However, while the visual differences between the two portraits were most likely expressive of changing ideas about 'savages', each painting seems to have been at least partly matched to the dominant artistic and scientific modes of thinking for the periods in which they were produced. This indicates that during Britain's search for a Northwest Passage between 1818 and 1859 there was not a unified discourse about Inuit peoples, or 'savages' more broadly, but a shift between two distinct understandings of the basic nature of humankind. In this sense each portrait can be said to be partially reflective of a discourse, with Nasmyth's painting of Zakæus expressing enlightenment ideas about 'Noble Savages' and the basic equality of all people, while the painting of Qalasirssuaq appears more clearly bound up in the racial and hierarchical thinking that became increasingly prevalent in Europe from mid century onwards. Thus, Nasmyth's painting of Zakæus seems to have pointed backwards in time, while the double portrait of Qalasirssuaq conversely foreshadowed much of what would come.

Even though each painting is bound up in the representational modes and intellectual climate of their time, and in this way seem to function as generic images of all Inuit, neither one fully erases the unique character and life story of the individuals pictured. This is particularly true of the Nasmyth portrait, which may have genuinely captured some of Zakæus's extraordinary personality and individuality as well as the apparently open and unrestricted ways in which he moved within and interacted with British society. Although the same cannot necessarily be said of the double portrait of Qalasirssuaq, it nonetheless seems to document one aspect of his existence in Britain; if the painting limits his persona and renders him the by-product of a civilising project, it might truthfully communicate Qalasirssuaq's confined circumstances while being converted into a future servant of empire. Both paintings in any case serve a crucial documentary function, acting as starting points from which to uncover marginalised stories in which named Inuit individuals replace British explorers – and Arctic exploration more generally – as the focus of attention. Both paintings link to a number of other visual and textual documents including, perhaps most importantly, traces of Zakæus's and Qalasirssuaq's personal voices. Like their biographies, the letters and images they produced, or reproductions of these, testify to the fact that it was not only the majority culture that produced ideas about the Arctic during Britain's high point of exploration in this region. Though sparsely evidenced, the representations of the Arctic offered by Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq are scenes of life and activity that, in drawing on the artistic traditions of Inuit culture to convey notions of familiarity and homeliness, strike at the core of the well-known stories of extreme heroism and sacrifice that have dominated popular perceptions and scholarship alike.

The print titled *First Communication* based on a field drawing by Zakæus makes for a particularly interesting case. As one of the first representations of the Arctic landscape, Inuit people and exploration to be produced in the context of Britain's renewed search for a Northwest Passage in the nineteenth century, this print certainly would have had the potential to impact perceptions of the Arctic and even influence subsequent representations – particularly those that, like it, would show scenes of

encounter between British explorers and newly discovered Inuit peoples. Although it is difficult to locate any later imagery that draws directly on the reproduction of Zakæus's image, it remains a crucial point that this was a representation of the Arctic and exploration that was circulated widely and which openly acknowledged Zakæus as its author. If *First Communication* puts Zakæus on an even footing with British explorers – both in the sense that it shows him, an Inuit, taking an active and central role in exploration and, furthermore, that it is a scene over which Zakæus had ownership – it seems that the print itself was also of equal value to imagery produced by or based on the work of explorers. The entrepreneurs of the *Peristrepthic Panorama of the Frozen Regions* do not seem to have used Zakæus's field drawing because it was the product of a 'savage' and thus a curiosity, but because it was very valuable as an on-the-spot representation of the Arctic.

Indeed, it is through the *Peristrepthic Panorama of the Frozen Regions* – which is the first known moving panorama to have had an Arctic subject – rather than the expedition account of Ross's First Voyage, that Zakæus's version of the Arctic may have had the greater impact on popular perceptions of the region in Britain. Painted by father and son duo Peter and William Marshall, this show toured throughout Britain and Ireland with great success in at least the years 1821 to 1823 and again in the early 1830s.¹⁶⁴ Accompanied by a military band and a travelling collection of Arctic artefacts, the panorama showed eight separate scenes from the first two expeditions of the century – six covering Buchan's and Franklin's and two of Ross's and Parry's, each set to a specific musical score. Zakæus's name features frequently in advertisements for the Marshalls' elaborate production, wherein he is consistently credited alongside Ross and lieutenant Frederick William Beechey as one of the artists upon whose works the panorama's scenes had been based. In longer advertisements Zakæus's appearances in the actual show are highlighted, placing him – 'the celebrated Esquimaux' – in the same category as Buchan, Franklin, Ross and Parry as individuals mentioned by name. In addition, his kayak – advertised as

¹⁶⁴ Potter writes that the panorama toured 'for more than a decade', yet also explains that 'The news of the Rosses' return in 1833 gave the Marshalls occasion to dust it off and send it on tour again', suggesting that it was not continuously shown from 1821 to 1833. Potter, 2007, p. 87.

‘Saccheuse’s real Canoe, 18 feet long’ – was a prime attraction in the accompanying ‘Museum of Natural and Artificial Curiosities, brought from Baffin’s Bay’ in which visitors to the panorama could view Inuit clothing and a range of plant and animal specimens.¹⁶⁵ Although the advertisements do not make explicit which scene or scenes were based on Zakæus’s drawings, descriptions of the seventh – which was often pointed to already in the main headings of the advertisements – suggest strong visual similarities with the print titled *First Communication*:¹⁶⁶

View VII. – The Isabella, Captain Ross, and the Alexander, commanded by Captain Parry, at the new-discovered Land in Baffin’s Bay, named by Captain Ross the Arctic Highlands: – Capt. Ross, Capt. Parry, Saccheuse the Esquimaux, and some of the Crew giving presents, and in conference with the Natives. – Music, Savage Dance, composed on purpose.¹⁶⁷

The dissemination of Zakæus’s perspectives on the Arctic through reproductions of his drawing in Ross’s expedition account and the Marshalls’ moving panorama indicates that Inuit did not exist only in representations produced of them. While perhaps uncommon, in certain instances Inuit individuals like Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq may have been able to exercise varying degrees of self-representation. By doing so they might have succeeded in communicating other ideas about Inuit peoples than the ones typically sanctioned and articulated by the majority. While the opportunity for self-representation seems more plausible in the case of Zakæus, who appears to have taken part in exploration on equal terms with explorers, Qalasirssuaq may have similarly disrupted – if through more indirect means – prevailing notions about ‘savages’. Washington’s preface to his *Greenland-Eskimo Vocabulary*, which would have been distributed throughout the navy in the 1850s, openly acknowledges the invaluable contribution Qalasirssuaq made to the project, expressing clear admiration for a young man he considered to be intelligent and quite capable in

¹⁶⁵ *Bristol Mercury* 7 April 1823. This summary description of the Marshalls’ moving panorama is based on newspaper advertisements from Glasgow, Edinburgh and Bristol; all give the same general information, with expected changes in wording and varying degrees of detail. See also *Caledonian Mercury* 29 March 1821; *Glasgow Herald* 11 March 1822; *Bristol Mercury* 23 June 1823.

¹⁶⁶ Advertisements published in the *Bristol Mercury* highlighted in their headings Ross’s and Parry’s ‘Interview with the Natives on the Ice’. *Bristol Mercury* 7 April 1823; *Bristol Mercury* 23 June 1823.

¹⁶⁷ *Glasgow Herald* 11 March 1822.

English. Recounting how Qalasirssuaq had ‘as soon as he could explain himself’ reclaimed his ‘native name’ in place of the one the explorers had given him, Washington further pointed to the fact that ‘they term themselves’ Inuit and that ‘the word Eskimo is not known’.¹⁶⁸ Qalasirssuaq’s surviving drawings seem to testify to a similar awareness of the complex dynamics of self-representation, taking control of and expressing an Inuit identity that ran counter to the place and role assigned to him in British society.

¹⁶⁸ Washington, 1853, pp. vi-vii.

Conclusion

As this thesis has demonstrated, the range of ‘images’ and ‘imaginings’ produced about and in relationship to the Arctic in the period connected to Britain’s search for a Northwest Passage between 1818 and 1859 do not amount to a unified and unchallenged discourse about the region. The separate images presented and discussed in this thesis have been shown to be rooted in specific circumstances of time and place; each linked to distinct social, scientific and political contexts and resulting from varying types of interactions between artists and the Arctic peoples and landscapes they represented, whether in the Arctic or in Britain. These unique combinations of historical-social context and the terms of artistic production and reproduction generated varying ideas about and representations of both landscape and the Inuit, suggesting that the Arctic was not a closed field of thought and study during the period under consideration. While repeating stereotypes are certainly recognisable within the three main genres that have been treated, the construction of an idea or image of the Arctic in Western visual culture was by no means a monolithic process that went uncontested. Within professional landscape painting, exploration imagery and Inuit portraiture, mainstream ideas about the ‘Esquimaux type’ and an eternally frozen, lifeless and threatening ‘North’ existed side by side with alternative images that showed the Arctic landscape and its peoples to be something else entirely: a place full of colour and life, with Inuit individuals capable of articulating their identity and taking part in exploration and British society alike.

In considering both British and non-British perspectives of the Arctic in the particular genre of high-art landscape painting, the thesis has shown how three well-

known works produced by artists established within the canon of Western art history did not represent the region in a unified way. While each shows a shipwreck in a frozen and empty landscape, Friedrich's *Das Eismeer*, Church's *The Icebergs* and Landseer's *Man Proposes – God Disposes* were bound up in and expressive of different social, aesthetic and political circumstances, revealing that scenes which appear to be similar do not necessarily articulate homogeneous modes of thinking. Two key conclusions can be drawn in this instance. The first is that Friedrich's, Church's and Landseer's paintings are tied to two different discourses about the Arctic, with an important shift occurring following the Franklin disaster around mid century causing the climate of overwhelming optimism that marked the re-ignition of Britain's search for a Northwest Passage in the first few decades of the nineteenth century to progressively give way to pessimism and an increasingly darker view on Arctic exploration. The second issue is the role played by direct encounter; as was the case with Church, the experience of drawing the Arctic at first hand can result in representations of 'other' places that are not always or completely controlled by the dominant discourses of a time.

Internal contradictions within a fixed genre were similarly discovered in the discussion of the visual material resulting from Ross's Second Voyage of 1829-1833. Herein, sustained interaction between explorers and Inuit peoples in the Arctic proved to have an impact on representation, with Ross's amateur 'event' scenes and 'type' drawings expressing a range of overlapping desires and ambitions. The thesis's consideration of Ross's popular exhibitions, *Narrative* and *Appendix* showed that although Ross may have aspired to construct and present a unified view of the Arctic, exploration and the Inuit, he did not quite manage to do this. Although Ross used the Netsilik Inuit he encountered on his voyage to promote and draw attention to the successes of his venture and, in particular, the central roles he had played in the expedition, they did not remain within the representational limits he imposed upon them. Alongside images of the Netsilik Inuit as representative specimens of a primitive and backwards race of 'savages', Ross's multi-media retelling of his Arctic adventures consistently made room for and included them as active participants in his narrative of discovery and exploration. As a result, the images of the Netsilik

Inuit that circulated in Ross's various productions both reinforced long-standing stereotypes about Inuit peoples while simultaneously presenting them as named individuals and hinting at the existence of real personalities and stories of their own.

Tensions and complexities were found also in professional portraits painted of Inuit individuals that came to Britain at the beginning and end of the high-point of Britain's historical search for a Northwest Passage. The analysis of the portraits of Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq demonstrated that the paintings express a number of competing influences; caught between ideas about 'noble' and 'ignoble savages', neither work can be easily categorised as a portrait or ethnographic image. Linked to a shift in thinking that saw the enlightenment ideals about the basic unity of humankind being replaced by the race-based assumptions central to phrenology and comparative anatomy, the portraits reveal that there was not a unified view of Arctic peoples in the period 1818-1859. While expressing ideologies and drawing on representational modes characteristic for the early and mid nineteenth century respectively, the portraits of Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq nonetheless communicate the individuality and personal histories of their sitters. In doing so, both paintings point to previously untold stories in the history of Arctic exploration, with named Inuit individuals producing and sometimes disseminating their own ideas about and representations of Arctic landscapes and peoples while living in the very heart of empire. Although uncommon, such instances reveal that perceptions of the Arctic were not completely controlled by a majority culture and that Inuit voices could at times exist alongside and perhaps even challenge dominant points of view.

The methodology used in this thesis has been to isolate groupings of images according to both genre and subject matter. The ambition with this approach has been to uncover the complexity of each image in relationship to others of its type and, by extension, to arrive at a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the multiple ways in which historical realities, artistic motives and aesthetic lineages intersected with personal and collective imaginations to produce representations of Arctic landscapes, peoples and exploration. As summarised above, there did not exist within each genre a coherent and internal logic that served to limit the ways in which

the Arctic and its peoples were thought about in Britain in the early to mid nineteenth century. While comparisons and investigations across the three separate genres treated in this thesis have not been made directly, reading in between the case studies presented in each chapter certainly seems to complicate the situation further. Positioning any one of the high-art landscape paintings discussed in chapter two against the representations of the Arctic offered by Zakæus or Qalasirssuaq in chapter four, for example, suggests a far wider gulf still in perceptions about the region. Likewise, considering Ross's drawings of Netsilik Inuit in chapter three alongside the paintings of Zakæus and Qalasirssuaq further indicates that all images of Inuit produced during Britain's search for a Northwest Passage between 1818 and 1859 were by no means equivalent.

Needless to say, the transferral of a Saidian conception of 'discourse' to questions of Arctic representation in the time period and geographical region that have been under discussion would struggle to accommodate – much less account for – the range of ideas and images treated in this thesis. This is not to devalue or underestimate the very real and often negative impact that persistent stereotypes about the Arctic and its peoples have had throughout history, but to acknowledge that – as writers like Mary Louise Pratt and Stephanie Pratt have argued previously – there exists a greater complexity of ideas and ways of thinking. A diversity and multiplicity of voices can be found in both Western representations of other peoples and places and, although perhaps more tentatively, the traces left behind by those individuals who have been categorised as 'savages'. Although severe limitations are encountered when attempting to uncover the latter, due to both a shortage of material and the theoretical and methodological armatures that would be required, the task of revealing and writing about non-Western perspectives is to some degree possible.

Responding to and building on previous literature that has examined representations of the Arctic and the ways in which these representations have articulated both persistent and shifting notions about the region, this thesis took as its starting point a recognisable gap in scholarship – namely, the absence of an art historical study focused uniquely on Arctic imagery that would consider not only a range of different

material, but examine in detail the particular circumstances in which a given image was conceived, produced, displayed and received. In filling this gap, this thesis has contributed to existing understandings of Arctic representations in the nineteenth century in two primary ways. The first has been to insert into this field of scholarship more thorough analyses of a number of images that have previously been incorporated within Arctic studies and sometimes also art history, but not necessarily situated in their fuller historical, social, political and aesthetic contexts. The second has been to bring to light material that has not been considered before, in particular images associated with marginalised or untold stories in the history of Arctic exploration. To this end, the thesis has from the start been conceived and executed as an archival and collections-based research project, the hope being that the results generated by tight visual analysis of a controlled selection of images might productively open up a wide range of future possibilities.

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